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Evaluation of the Autism Education Trust Programme, 2016-2017

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27th June, 2017.

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

The Autism Education Trust (AET) Programme is currently in its fourth stage. In successive stages from 2011-13, the AET has developed and delivered training and support materials for Early Years, School, and Post-16 settings. The AET Programme has demonstrated high levels of effectiveness in terms of delivery, materials, satisfaction, and impact. In March 2016, the Department for Education (DfE) announced that it had extended the AET contract for another year, awarding it a budget of £750,000 to fund the AET Programme, 2016-17. The 2016-17 Programme comprised of six main strands, in addition to the training programme run by the existing 25 training hubs, which is on-going.

The Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research (CEDAR), the University of Warwick, was asked by the AET to focus its evaluation of the 2016-17 Programme on four of the main elements of that Programme:

- The establishment of five Regional Networks to support schools and Local Authorities (LAs) using the AET materials to improve autism education.
- The roll out of Post-16 training and its integration with Ambitious About Autism's (AAA) Succeeding at College programme, in a new training package entitled, 'Supporting the Move from School to College'.
- A project to help prevent young people with autism from being excluded from school. This was led by the National Autistic Society (NAS) and provided information for parents, as well as for professionals, through a range of delivery platforms, including face-to-face, telephone, e-mail, social media and exclusion seminars.
- The establishment of the "AET Young People's Panel" to input into all AET Programme areas.

This report is a full, summative report, of the evaluation of the AET Programme 2016-17.

1.2 Findings

1.2.1 The Exclusions Project

The evaluation data showed that the Exclusions Project was, overall, successful in meeting its targets with regard to the numbers of parents/carers of Children and Young People with Autism (CYPA) engaged, April 2016 – March, 2017. For each deliverable, with the exception of telephone/e-mail and volunteer support, the planned numbers of parents/carers to be reached by each method had been exceeded by February 2017. If an average of telephone/e-mail support for the 11 months shown is taken – 64 – then the final total for the year can be estimated as 772, of the 1,000 parent/carer target. In terms of the volunteer support, the year-end total can be estimated at just over 200, out of the target of 400. This, in fact, represents a success, as only one volunteer was recruited and trained.

The parent/carer interview data, based on 21 interviews with 16 parents/carers suggested that exclusions-related issues experienced by those parents/carers and the CYPA were much as identified by prior NAS work. The interviewees had faced six main issues in relation to exclusions:

- A lack of knowledge of autism and empathy for the pupil with autism.
- A lack of reasonable adjustments made to policies and practices.
- Behaviour that challenges staff, usually stemming from anxiety that occurs as a result of underlying difficulties and unmet needs.
- A lack of high quality Alternative Provision (AP) that is suitable to a pupil with autism's age, ability and individual needs.
- Pressure on a school to meet targets, perform well in league tables and secure a favourable judgement from Ofsted inducing head teachers to deviate from the statutory guidance on exclusion.

- Schools lacking a genuinely inclusive ethos.’¹

The parent/carer data showed a high level of satisfaction with the seminars run by the Exclusions Project, the information gained at those seminars, and the usefulness of that information in supporting parents/carers in their dealings with schools around exclusions. The data also included examples of where parents/carers had been able to use Exclusions Project information soon after attending the seminars, illustrating impact.

1.2.2 Supporting the Move from School to College

The Supporting the Move from School to College project met all its output targets, producing a manual, and training package incorporating the AET Post-16 training and the AAA’s Succeeding at College programme. The new Supporting the Move from School to College offer was piloted at nine regional training events across England (September 2016 – March, 2017), and a London-based national Post-16 conference was also held in March, 2017.

The evaluation collected a range of data, including 186 pre and post training event matched pair questionnaires completed by training event delegates. That data showed that a broad range of relevant autism-related roles were recruited to the pilot events, including senior leadership, SENCOs, autism specialists, learning support, well-being and mental health, curriculum, careers, and pastoral staff from schools and colleges. The delegates were, overall, strongly positive about the training, with, for example, 89% being made aware by the training of at least one positive change that could be made to benefit students with autism, while 67% felt that the training highlighted weaknesses in the respondents’ setting’s current practice in relation to students with autism. Delegates also provided clear statements about specific changes that they intended to pursue in order to improve autism support in their settings, as a result of learning from the training.

¹ AET: ‘AET Project Brief: Reducing Exclusions’ (2016), p.3.

1.2.3 The Regional Networks

The AET Programme 2016-17 provided pump-priming funding, of £10k per Regional Network, for five AET hubs to run four events per region. The total of 20 events were initially intended to have been run by the end of the 2016-17 financial year. However, delays in the roll out of events by some of the hubs, meant that by the end of March, 2017, only 10 of the events had been offered, with the remaining events planned in April, and May, 2017. Of the first 10 events delivered, the evaluation was made aware of seven of them. It was those seven Regional Network events which are reported here.

The Regional Network events were successful in delivering to a wide range of delegates across England. The approach adopted – that of allowing the Regional Hubs to determine the intended audience, and, therefore, the content, of each of the events – reflected the AET approach of regional delivery and fine-tuning. The Regional Networks reported on here drew in over 260 delegates from a wide range of stakeholders, including school governors, autism professionals, LA staff, education practitioners, Early Years, school, and P-16 workers, school leaders, and SEND practitioners. The data generated by pre and post-event questionnaires, delivered at the Regional Network events, showed a high degree of satisfaction with the running of the events, and with the information and knowledge gained, along with the, valued, opportunities for networking.

Follow-up interviews, carried out with delegates who had attended two of the earliest Regional Network events (allowing for up to two months before the follow-up interviews took place) indicated that the events had generated impact. In terms of planning to progress autism support at all levels, the interviewees gave a wide range of planning that was in place as a result of attendance at the Regional Network events. In addition, there was strong support expressed for the hope that Regional Network events might continue in the future.

1.2.4 The Young People's Panel

The AET Programme 2016-2017 intended to establish an AET Young People's Panel (YPP) to input into all aspects of the AET Programme and its future development. The task during the 2016-2017 Programme was to recruit, train, and bring together a YPP, to begin the process of engaging with the development of the AET Programme.

The Young People's Panel was successfully recruited, trained, and rolled out during the AET Programme 2016-17. It has already provided feedback and input into parts of the AET Programme, and is now in a position to extend and deepen its involvement, as the voice of young people with autism, in the whole AET Programme. Dates for future meetings of the YPP have been set up to February, 2018.

1.3 Observations and recommendations

The evaluation makes the following observations and recommendations:

- The success of the Exclusions Project in supporting nearly 12,000 parents/carers through a variety of platforms during the AET Programme 2016-17, illustrates the continuing need for such support. The data gathered by the evaluation from parents/carers who attended the exclusions seminars, run as part of the Exclusions Project, suggests that the issues faced by CYPA in relation to exclusions continue to be problematic. The exclusions issue is complex, combining structural, personal, and legal challenges for parents/carers of CYPA in their dealings with educational settings and other stake holders. In consequence, it is important the Exclusions Project continues to be offered to parents/carers and educational settings concerned with the support of CYPA. In addition, the role of the volunteer support worker on the Exclusions Project should be noted as an important, but challenging one. The initial intention to recruit and train five volunteers proved difficult, and only one volunteer was active at the time of the evaluation. Some thought might be given to ways in which additional volunteers can be recruited in future.
- The Supporting the Move from School to College project was a highly successful element of the AET Programme 2016-17. The project met all of its deliverables, and

piloted the revised and developed training package – complementing the AET Post-16 training with learning from Ambitious About Autism’s Succeeding at College training- through nine regional training events. The Supporting the Move from School to College module is a valuable addition to the AET offer in this area, and it is recommended that stakeholders are made fully aware of this development.

- The Regional Network events were successful in delivering to a wide range of delegates across England. The approach adopted – that of allowing the Regional Hubs to determine the intended audience, and, therefore, the content, of each of the events – reflected the AET approach of regional delivery and fine-tuning. The data generated by pre and post-event questionnaires, delivered at the Regional Network events, showed a high degree of satisfaction with the running of the events, and with the information and knowledge gained, along with the, valued, opportunities for networking. Follow-up interviews, carried out with delegates who had attended two of the earliest Regional Network events indicated that the events had generated impact. In terms of planning to progress autism support at all levels, the interviewees gave a wide range of planning that was in place as a result of attendance at the Regional Network events. In addition, there was strong support expressed for the hope that Regional Network events might continue in the future. The main challenge faced by some of the Regional hubs was in delivering the Regional Network events within the originally planned timeframe. It might be that the AET, in similar circumstances in future, develop mechanisms for monitoring project delivery.
- The Young People’s Panel was successfully recruited, trained, and rolled out during the AET Programme 2016-17. It has already provided feedback and input into parts of the AET Programme, and is now in a position to extend and deepen its involvement, as the voice of young people with autism, in the whole AET Programme. Dates for future meetings of the YPP have been set up to February, 2018.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

The Autism Education Trust's (AET) capacity building programme is now in its seventh year. There have been three earlier rounds of the Programme – the AET Programme 2011-2013; 2013-2015; and 2015-2016. The AET Programme 2011-13 established the regional hubs training model and introduced school years training for all school staff working with children and young people with autism. The 2013-15 Programme involved the development of new Early Years (EY) and Post-16 (P-16) training materials for workforces and settings supporting EY and P-16 children and young people with autism. The Programme consisted of three tiers of training which were delivered via four EY and four P-16 training hubs. The 2013-15 Programme also involved the development and roll-out of National Standards and Competency Frameworks for EY and P-16 settings. In addition, guides for parents and carers on working with their children's schools were produced. The 2015-2016 Programme introduced a newly developed Progression Framework, designed for the AET by Autism Associates. The Progression Framework was a response to the need for research-based models that can be applied by school staff to track the progress of children and young people with autism.

All rounds of the AET Programme were evaluated by the Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research, the University of Warwick. The evaluations (Cullen, M.A. *et al* 2012, 2013, Cullen, S.M. *et al*, 2014, 2015; Cullen, S.M. 2016) showed that the AET Programme, the training hubs model, and the training and support materials, including the Competency Framework, National Standards, and Progression Framework, were all successful in delivering well-regarded, high quality training to the workforce for children from Early Years to Post-16. The success of the earlier Programmes led to further Department for Education (DfE) funding for the AET Programme 2016-17, of £750,000.

2.2 The AET Programme 2016-2017

The 2016-17 Programme consisted of a number main strands, which both built upon earlier Programme delivery, and introduced new, additional elements to the AET Programme. The strands were:

- The completion of the national coverage of the AET Early Years Programme through two additional regional Early Years Training Hubs. This to be done through the commissioning of two further Early Years hubs.
- The completion of the national coverage of the AET Post 16 Programme through two additional Post 16 Training Hubs. This to be done through the commissioning of two further Post 16 hubs.
- Pump priming five regional networks to support schools and Local Authorities (LAs) using the AET materials to improve autism education.
- Additional support for the roll out of Post 16 training, and its integration with the 'Succeeding at College' programme. This strand of the 2016-17 Programme was entitled 'Supporting the Move from School to College'.
- The evaluation, by the AET, of key aspects of the AET Programme, including the long term impact of previous programmes.
- The establishment of an 'AET Young People's Panel' to facilitate the input of young people with autism across all 2016-18 Programme strands.
- The development and delivery of an autism and exclusions programme to address barriers to inclusion faced by children and young people with autism.
- Maintenance of core functions, including Programme co-ordination and partnership working with the voluntary sector and people with autism.

2.3 The evaluation

CEDAR was commissioned to evaluate the AET Programme 2016-17. The evaluation was focused on four of the main elements of the 2016-17 Programme:

- The establishment of five regional networks to support schools and Local Authorities (LAs) using the AET materials to improve autism education.
- The roll out of Post-16 training and its integration with Ambitious About Autism's Succeeding at College programme – 'Supporting the Move from School to College'.
- The project to help prevent children and young people with autism from being excluded from school. This project was led by the National Autistic Society and aimed to provide information for parents and carers, as well as for professionals.
- The establishment of the 'AET Young People's Panel' to input into all 2016-18 programme areas.

It is these four elements of the AET Programme 2016-17 that are reported upon here.

2.4 This report

This report presents data and analysis relating to each of the four evaluation elements. The data was gathered between 1st August 2016 and 24th March, 2017. The evaluation data was drawn from different sources, depending on the nature of each programme element. The evaluation followed the progress of each element of the AET Programme 2016-17, but the evaluation was completed prior to the full delivery of some aspects of the Programme.

3. The Exclusions Project (2016-17)

3.1 The exclusions project and the evaluation

3.1.1 Introduction – the exclusions project

The AET project brief for ‘Reducing Exclusions’ built upon the work of the National Autistic Society’s (NAS) work over the previous two years relating to exclusions. The NAS Exclusions Service has identified six key causes for the exclusion of children and young people with autism (CYPA):

- ‘A lack of knowledge of autism and empathy for the pupil with autism.
- A lack of reasonable adjustments made to policies and practices.
- Behaviour that challenges staff, usually stemming from anxiety that occurs as a result of underlying difficulties and unmet needs.
- A lack of high quality Alternative Provision (AP) that is suitable to a pupil with autism’s age, ability and individual needs.
- Pressure on a school to meet targets, perform well in league tables and secure a favourable judgement from Ofsted, inducing head teachers to deviate from the statutory guidance on exclusion.
- Schools lacking a genuinely inclusive ethos.’²

The NAS was subsequently contracted to develop its Exclusions Service work as part of the AET Programme 2016-17. The contract identified deliverables in four areas:

- i. ‘Providing information and advice for parents of CYPA who are excluded from school/FE college, or at risk of exclusion, via phone appointments, email, face to face – 1,000 parents annually.

² AET: ‘AET Project Brief: Reducing Exclusions’ (2016), p.3.

- ii. Coordinating volunteers to help support parents as above, extending the reach to a further 400 parents annually.
- iii. Information and Awareness – provide information for 10,000 education professionals on autism (including AET literature), resources and strategies to overcome barriers to inclusion via professional internet networks; information on the website and the teachers email networks.
- iv. Inclusion strategies – advice for schools on the key components of how to reintegrate CYPA who have been excluded from school or college, based on a model outreach service.’³

3.1.2 The evaluation of the exclusions project

The evaluation gathered a range of data related to the four deliverables. NAS Exclusions Service documentation was collected, the NAS project lead was interviewed, along with the project volunteer staff. In addition, an evaluation researcher attended two Exclusions Service seminars for parents and carers, and 21 semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents and carers who had been recruited via seminars. The data collection is summarised in table 3.1.

3.1 Data collection: exclusions project

| <i>Exclusions project deliverable</i> |
|---|
| <i>Data Collected</i> |
| Interviews with project lead and volunteer support. |
| Observations at two exclusions seminars for parents/carers. |
| Of attendees at three seminars, 42 parents/carers contacted, of which 16 were |

³Ibid., p.4

interviewed, plus follow-up interviews with five of those parents/carers.

Progress report data from the NAS exclusions project, covering parent support, professional support.

3.2 Parent/carer data

3.2.1 Collecting parent/carer data

The Exclusions Project was tasked with ‘providing information and advice for parents of CYPA who are excluded from school/FE college, or at risk of exclusion, via phone appointments, email, face to face’, with the target of 1,000 parents annually. The evaluation gathered data regarding the numbers of parents/carers supported via phone appointments, email, and face to face contact from the Exclusions Project itself. In addition, to assess the needs of parents/carers, their expectations of, and the impact of face to face support from the Exclusions Project, attendees at three parent/carer exclusions seminars were interviewed by the evaluation. Finally, the NAS volunteer for the Exclusions Project was interviewed regarding the support provided for parents/carers in relation to exclusions.

3.2.2 The reach of the Exclusions Project

The NAS Exclusions Project made available summary data relating to the reach of the project between April 2016 and February, 2017. That data referred to support to parents/carers through the following mediums:

- Support to parents/carers via telephone and e-mail.
- Face to face advice at three Autism Shows.
- Parent seminars – five.
- Twitter.
- Unique page views to NAS webpages on exclusion.

- Volunteer support to parents.

The data was logged on a monthly basis and is presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Parent/carers contact April 2016-February 2017.

| Type of contact | Numbers of parents/carers reached, April 2016-February 2017 | | | | | | | | | | | | Total & (target) |
|-------------------|--|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------------------|
| Month | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | |
| Phone, email. | 66 | 93 | 75 | 71 | 66 | 36 | 91 | 90 | 70 | 72 | 38 | 116 | 824 (1000) |
| 3 Autism shows. | | | 57 | | | | | | | | | | 57 (30) |
| Seminars. | 15 | 8 | 45 | 63 | | | | 16 | | | | 119 | 309 (90) |
| Twitter Q&A. | | 1181 | | | | | | | | | | | 1181 |
| Website. | | | | | | | | | | | | | 9503 |
| Volunteer support | 11 | 11 | 13 | 32 | 3 | 19 | 24 | 23 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 25 | 221 (400) |
| Total | | | | | | | | | | | | | 12095 |

For each deliverable, with the exception of telephone/e-mail and volunteer support, the planned numbers of parents/carers to be reached was exceeded by the end of March 2017. In terms of the volunteer support, the year-end total was 221, out of the target of 400. This, in fact, represented a notable success, as only one volunteer was recruited, trained, and took up their role, out of a planned ten volunteers (see 3.2.3 below for details).

The Evaluation Project also collected data on the satisfaction of parents/carers with the advice and support they received from the Exclusions Project. A survey was e-mailed to parents/carers four weeks after contact with the service, and again after six months (see Appendix 1). For all statements, satisfaction – ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ - was 90%. The statements were:

Survey questions after four weeks:

- Do you feel the advice you were given today has helped?
- The exclusions adviser helped me to understand the options open to me.
- I feel able to act upon the information received from the exclusions adviser.
- I feel more knowledgeable about the exclusions process.
- The literature I received following my enquiry was helpful.

Survey questions after six months:

- I feel more confident about my child's educational future.
- My child is happier at school.
- I feel that the school has a better understanding of my child's needs.

3.2.3 Volunteer support.

The NAS runs a number of help lines which are supported by volunteers. As part of the AET Programme 2016-17, this model was to be extended to the NAS Exclusions Service. The original intention was that up to 10 volunteers would be recruited to support the Exclusions Project. In the event, only one volunteer was fully trained and able to support the project. This volunteer was interviewed by the evaluation in February, 2017, and provided insights into the training for the role, and the nature, and demands of the role.

The volunteer had previous experience working as a volunteer support on another NAS helpline. The volunteer gave a detailed account of the training that she undertook in order to become a volunteer on the exclusions helpline:

'So he [the exclusions lead] wrote, prepared and sent by email to me I think it was ten modules and I had a period of time in which to complete them and each of the modules then he marked them according to points he was looking for, points in the

law and various aspects, and I think he was looking for a score, a percentage, in order to go on to the next level of training. So I completed that written work and it was written working looking at documents he'd sent and also following up references online to government and the law and regulations and so on. So it was quite interactive work. It wasn't just reading the modules; it meant you'd done research. So I completed all of that and then we had a face to face training for a day in London and I attended that as well. And then after that he began very gradually with doing an email one so he has a request from a parent in an email and the parent wanted an email reply so he began with that and I forwarded it to him when I completed it, so he had a way, it was a gatekeeping monitoring or I was his apprentice.' VE1

This account suggests strongly that the preparation and training for the volunteer role was well thought through and prepared. The volunteer was very positive about the way in which the training prepared her for the role; it was, she said, training of 'a very high standard' (VE1). It may, however, be that the need to carry through this level of training also explained the fall-off in the number of potential volunteers. At first, there were ten volunteers, but by the time of the training day in London, that number had fallen to four, of which only two went on to deliver support, and, by the time of the evaluation interview in February 2017, only one volunteer was still in place.

The volunteer role is undoubtedly one that calls for a high level of commitment in terms of time and effort. The volunteer explained how the role worked:

'[The project lead] sends you the details and a few notes about what the parent has said on the phone because they fall into a recorded message box. So he sends that to me and then I read that through and again you do preparation and you get ready and you think this part of the law is going to come up, this is the sort of thing they're going to talk about, and then I begin to talk to the parent and then follow that up

with an email which is summarising the call but then a document that's attached, and it's quite a lengthy document, and I follow the way that [the project lead] has set it up. It's quite prescribed and it's complicated and it's really based around the law so when we make any statement I have to put in a reference and then that reference you click on it and you either go to the end of the document or online to see the law.' VE1.

In all, the preparation, the telephone call, and the follow-up e-mail takes, typically, three hours of work, with the telephone call being around 30-40 minutes. There is stress laid on the legal framework that governs exclusions and disability rights, and the volunteer noted that the follow-up e-mail to the parent/carer 'is really based around the law, so when we make a statement, I have to put in a reference, and then the reference, when you click on it, you either go to the end of the document or online and see the law,' (VE1).

In addition, the volunteer noted that there was another element to the support work beyond explaining legal issues related to exclusion and CYPA. The nature of the issue means that parents/carers are often stressed and anxious, and that there is an element of the volunteer role that is focused on providing reassurance. The combination of demands on volunteers – the training, time commitments, and emotional commitment – are likely to be the explanation for the high drop-out rate experienced by the volunteer element of the Exclusions Project.

3.2.4 Parents/carers, exclusions issues and the Exclusions Project.

The NAS exclusions project delivered three parent/carer seminars during November, 2016. These were organised through local NAS branches, and were held in Hereford (4th November), Hatfield (17th November), and Leeds (28th November). In addition, two further NAS parent/carer seminars were organised for 9th and 10th March, but came too late for inclusion in the evaluation; while parent seminars were held in April, May, June and July, 2016, before the evaluation was running. An evaluation researcher attended the Hereford

and Leeds seminars, and in addition to observing the seminars, spoke to the parents/carers to explain the nature and purpose of the evaluation, and ask for contact details from parents/carers who would be interested in being interviewed, by telephone, with regard to the seminars, and their experiences of issues relating to CYPA and exclusion. Parents/carers who attended the Hatfield seminar were also asked if they would like to take part in the evaluation. In all, 42 parents/carers were subsequently contacted (Hereford, 8 parents/carers; Hatfield, 17 parents/carers, Leeds, 17 parents/carers), and 16 agreed to be interviewed (Hereford, four parents/carers, Hatfield, seven parents/carers; Leeds, five parents/carers). The interviews were all carried out, with informed consent, by telephone. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview schedule, were recorded, and fully transcribed. The interviews were analysed for themes derived from the interview questions (which were based on the project brief), with additional themes which emerged from interviewee-generated topics. The interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 70 minutes in length. The initial interviews were carried out in November, December, 2016, and early January, 2017. Interviewees were invited to take part in a follow up interview in late February, early March, 2017, if they felt that there were further issues they wanted to discuss in relation to exclusion. Five follow-up interviews were conducted, which were, again, fully transcribed and analysed.

3.2.5 Parent/carer interview data

The interview data is presented here under two main headings: 'The Issues relating to exclusions and CYPA', and 'Parent/carer views on the usefulness and impact of the Exclusions seminars'. Under the first heading, the background to the NAS's work on exclusions issues is reviewed, before the parent/carer data is examined. That data suggests that parents/carers experience six main issues in relation to exclusions: lack of understanding of autism on the part of schools and school staff; unwillingness of schools to make 'reasonable adjustments' for pupils with autism; poor communications between school and home; the use of informal exclusions by schools; and school refusal as a form of exclusion. The parent/carer data in relation to the exclusion seminars is presented in terms of the parents/carers' views of the usefulness of the seminars; new information that parents/carers gained at the seminars; and the impact of the seminars.

3.2.6 Issues relating to exclusions and CYPA

3.2.6.1 Background

Children and young people with autism can face particular issues in relation to exclusion from education settings. Department for Education figures show that in the academic year 2013-2014, pupils on the autism spectrum were four times more likely to receive a fixed term period exclusion than pupils without special educational needs, and four times more likely to be permanently excluded than pupils without special educational needs⁴. Ambitious About Autism's campaign, 'Ruled Out', focused on the issue of CYPA and exclusion, identified five areas of concern:

- Formal exclusion.
- Informal (illegal) exclusion.
- Lack of schools willing to support children with autism.
- School refusal.
- Alternative provision.⁵

Based on a survey of over 500 families of children with autism, Ambitious About Autism's report concluded that:

'20% of parents say their child with autism has been formally excluded in the past 12 months.

4 in 10 children with autism have been excluded informally and therefore illegally during their time at school.

⁴ Cited by the NAS Exclusions Service in its presentation, 'Background and overview of [exclusions] programme for 2016-17' (no date).

⁵ Ambitious About Autism (February, 2014), *Ruled Out; why are children with autism missing out on education?*, Ambitious About Autism, London.

Over half of parents of children with autism say they have kept their child out of school for fear that the school is unable to provide appropriate support.’⁶

It is this background that provides the context for the Exclusions Project, and for the data gathered by the evaluation from parents and carers who attended the Exclusions Project seminars.

3.2.6.2 Lack of understanding of autism on the part of schools and school staff

The parents/carers who were interviewed provided accounts of a range of difficulties that their children had faced in schools, and, in one case, a Further Education (F.E.) setting. To a degree, many of the difficulties faced by the children and their parents/carers stemmed from a lack of understanding of autism on the part of individual teachers and schools. But, seven of the 16 interviewees gave *specific* examples of problems which they saw as being illustrations of a lack of understanding of autism. Associated with this lack of understanding was a lack of training, with some of the parents/carers being aware of the very low levels of training that some school staff had received.

Two of the interviewees gave accounts of their children with autism being locked into rooms by themselves, while school staff kept the doors closed. One of the parents gave an account that appears to show a very low level of understanding of autism, with the teaching staff seeing the child’s manifestation of anxiety as ‘behaviour’:

‘The room that they had allocated for him, which had a big window, there were two members of staff holding the door shut. We only found out about this when because there was another lady from the County Council who was there to do an EHCP for another child and she was sitting in the Head’s office and heard all the kaffuffle outside and [name] shouting “Let me out, let me out”. And then she went out there,

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.6.

saw him and she said to the members of staff “That’s [name] – I know him. Can he come in here and look at something on my laptop?” and they just said “No, no, we can’t condone this sort of behaviour”. And this was him at 6 years old.’ (PC/12)

The other parent/carer gave an account of their child being ‘barricaded’ into a room, then given a fixed-term exclusion for struggling with the teacher to get free (PC/3).

The parent/carer interview data also provided other examples of school staff seeing evidence of anxiety and distress as being ‘naughtiness’ and ‘bad behaviour’. For example, one parent/carer said, ‘the same teacher said to me, “It’s nothing to do with him being autistic. He was just being naughty”’, (PC/2). The parents/carers were aware that this type of approach to autism was a result of low levels of autism training, and a tendency to underestimate the level of knowledge and understanding that was needed to support children with autism. One interviewee explained that she had been told by a teacher in her child’s autism unit (part of a mainstream school), that ‘because they were a special unit they did *not* get training!’ (PC/4). She went on to explain:

‘When he’s got his OCD, when he’s having his episodes, I just feel that they’re kind of stabbing in the dark at things and not really [understanding]. They say that he is defiant and I’m like no he’s avoidant. So it’s little things like that that I think in an autism specific unit, those things should not actually be said. It’s a bit “come on – who’s got the training here?”’ (PC/4)

Two other interviewees also mentioned the response that teachers gave when being told that their new pupil had autism: ‘the general thing I do run into on parents’ evening, is that “I’ve worked with an autistic child before”; but they’re completely different to my son’, (PC/5).

In response to these issues, interviewees argued that what was needed was greater awareness, training and specific provision to support. One interviewee summed this up, saying:

‘I really think that there needs to be more specific training in recognising that there is a problem with a particular child and how to deal with it but also maybe have a team of people in school who are really genned up on autism and are able to work together to deal with a child with problems. And also to have facilities – some schools have a quiet room but I think this needs to be on a much more general level so that children can go away and do what it is they want to do rather than having to conform with what everybody else is doing just for the time being until they get over their crisis.’ (PC/11).

Or, as another parent/carer put it: ‘I do feel there’s a lot of well-meaning people who don’t really know what they are doing’, (PC/4).

3.2.6.3 Schools and ‘reasonable adjustments’

Under the Equality Act 2010, schools are expected to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to the policies and practices to enable pupils with SEND to access the curriculum⁷. This is a legal requirement, and school policies and practice should incorporate the principle. An example of a school policy written in line with this requirement is:

‘This policy acknowledges the school’s legal requirements under the Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments to the application of this policy for disabled pupils. To avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage in relation to non-disabled pupils, the school may make reasonable

⁷ *Equality Act, 2010*, Chapter 15, Part 6, Schedule 13: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>, accessed, 23 March, 2017.

adjustments to this policy and apply different sanctions, if it is felt that their behaviour is a direct consequence of their disability.’⁸

Despite the legal framework governing the formation and application of school policy, parent/carers interviewed drew attention to the failure of their children’s schools to make reasonable adjustments that reflected the needs of children and young people with autism. In addition, the majority of parent/carers interviewed said that, prior to attending the exclusions seminar, they were unaware that schools had a legal obligation to undertake ‘reasonable adjustments’ (for this, see below, 3.3.2 Parent/carers views of the usefulness of the seminars’).

Five of the interviewees talked about problems that they had experienced in convincing schools to make reasonable adjustments in order for their children to access schooling. The problems included a refusal to make adjustments, an insistence that no adjustments could be made to school policy because all pupils had to be treated the same, and the failure to implement reasonable adjustments that had been agreed upon. The impact of these failings on the pupils and their parents/carers was great, and included school refusal, which is, in effect, a form of exclusion when arising from the consequences of a school not making reasonable adjustments.

One parent/carers explained that all her child required was support during unstructured times of the school day. However, the school’s response was:

‘It’s very much yes they say they’re an inclusion school, but when it comes down to a child with difficulties, it’s like well actually we’re not willing to change anything, we’re not willing to do this, we’re not willing to do that. It was just really not a very nice ... I’ve not got a nice thing to say about the school if I’m honest or the Head

⁸ Cited by the NAS Exclusions Service in its presentation, ‘Background and overview of [exclusions] programme for 2016-17’ (no date).

Teacher. [Name] was bullied by the children but apparently it was all his own fault. He was bullied by the teachers. It was just not nice.’ (PC/15)

The failure of this school to put in support during the unstructured times of the day led to the pupil being excluded, and, eventually, his parents took him out of the school. In this instance, the school was unwilling to make changes, but in another example, a head teacher actively enforced a school policy that refused to allow any reasonable adjustments for children with disabilities; in effect, an illegal policy. A new head teacher introduced an across-the-board ‘zero tolerance’ policy which led to the internal isolation (exclusion) of a pupil with autism, threats of permanent exclusion, and an intimidatory reintegration meeting, leading to school refusal on the part of the pupil. The details of this case are presented in Case Study 1.

Case Study 1: ‘Zero tolerance’ and refusal to make reasonable adjustments.

- *A ‘zero tolerance’ policy:*

‘We had a new head teacher come in, and he has completely changed things; he’s got this zero tolerance policy, even to children with special needs, and we know through closed Facebook groups that he has excluded, along with our son, a considerable number of pupils with special needs. [...] We’ve been to meetings with them, we’ve explained, we’ve provided evidence from agencies such as CAMHS. They accept that he has problems but they will not make any concessions. He has a zero tolerance policy. If you interrupt the learning of others then, as far as he’s concerned, you forfeit your right to be in the school are his exact words.’
- *Exclusion:*

‘My son has been excluded now four times since the beginning of the new term and the last reintegration meeting we had on Friday last week we were told yet again in no uncertain terms that next transgression will be permanent exclusion.’
- *A reintegration meeting:*

‘When we had the last integration meeting he then decided that he was going to recite to my son the statements from other pupils following this latest incident for which my son was excluded. Rather than give an account of what happened – not that I saw these reports – he then proceeded to tell my son that all these pupils

had said that they're sick and tired of him interrupting their learning and why is he still in the school? And we're meant to be there for a positive re-integration meeting and my son just got really upset, understandably. And that is just so unprofessional.'

- *School refusal:*

'They convinced him that he hates the place so much that he does hate it and he wants to leave so they are almost fanning the flames on purpose and watch him fail; that's how it feels.'

(All quotations from interview with PC/13.)

The other interviewees provided a range of examples where schools, and in one case an FE college, had failed to put into place minor adjustments to enable children and young people to access their education. One example was given by PC/5. The mainstream secondary school had agreed that her son needed his homework tasks to be broken down into clear stages, so that he could understand the tasks and complete them. Despite agreeing to this small adjustment, the teachers concerned did not, in fact, do this. The mother explained:

'They're supposed to write in the homework book for him but they never do so he never understands his homework. Most of the time I'm sending in letters saying he can't do this homework because you haven't broken it down, you haven't written in his book like agreed. A lot of his teachers still do ignore that.' (PC/5)

When challenged by the mother, the school's response was, "he can write down his own homework". The impact of this failure was that:

'His grades have dropped a lot; I think Science has gone down, Maths he's gone down a group. He's actually really, really struggling because he was very high

achieving in primary school – they were really good- but it's since he's got to high school he's really dropped.' (PC/5)

One interviewee provided an example of the unwillingness of a FE College to allow her daughter to have a gradual integration into the college. The college advertised itself as an inclusion college, but:

'We went there and met with the Learning Support lady and she was talking very much about it's Monday to Friday 9 till 4 and I was like "[name] hasn't been in an educational setting for 2 years – we'd need to build this up more gradually". "Oh sorry we don't do that"' (PC/9)

The result of this was that the young person was unable to enter college.

3.2.6.4 Poor school-home communications

Only three of the interviewees raised the issue of their child's school having poor communication with them, but, interestingly, the three cases were very similar. All hinged on the refusal of the school in question to believe what the parents/carers were telling the school about the needs of their child with autism, and the impact of not supporting those needs in school.

All three parents said that schools had refused to believe the parents when they were describing the impact at home of their children's difficulties in school. In addition, schools were also sceptical when parents/carers described situations and needs that school staff had not themselves witnessed. One of the interviewees explained that her child was extremely scared by operating bin lorries, and similar machinery. As a result, she tried to get the school to ensure that a member of staff was with her child for a planned school outing that would involve walking on the street. However, the school said that it had never seen

her child being panicked like that, despite the fact that the school was not the same environment. The parent commented, 'the parent relationship [with the school] when you've got a child that's got autism – if they don't see if they don't think it happens,' (PC/10).

More broadly, another interviewee gave an account of how difficult she had found it to convince her child's school that anxiety, difficulties, and lack of support during the school day led directly to challenging behaviour that was not displayed at home. The school seemed unable to appreciate that behaviour was context-specific:

'His anxiety levels were through the roof, although we didn't realise that until after he'd left [that school] and what a different child he was. At home he was not the same child as he was at school and the head teacher virtually called me a liar for saying that I'd never seen him exhibit that sort of behaviour that he was exhibiting at school. And then social workers got involved as well because he made a referral for child protection because he thought with the violent behaviour he must be being beaten at home. It was a nightmare.' (PC/12).

3.2.6.5 Informal exclusions

Six of the interviewees raised problems they and their children had experienced in relation to informal exclusion that was unrecorded, or involved prolonged periods on reduced timetables without effective reintegration plans being put in place. The typical experience was of parents/carers receiving telephone calls asking them to come to the school and take their child home. One parent explained: 'They'd ring me "Come and do this or that" or they'd say "We can't deal with him – you need to take him home" but obviously then I didn't get a letter to confirm that he had been excluded,' (PC/15). This happened so often that the parent sought advice from a local parent partnership body and discovered that, in fact, the school was acting illegally: 'they told me about the legality of exclusions and a couple of times he obviously had illegal exclusions because it wasn't official,' (PC/15). This

form of *ad hoc*, unrecorded, exclusions based on getting the parent/carer to collect their child early from school was the most common form of informal exclusion. Related to this, was the experience of children who were placed on 'temporary' reduced timetables, but with no plan for a return to a full timetable, nor any indication of the length of time the reduced timetable would be in place. As one interviewee noted:

'They've got him on a temporary timetable. The plan has been increasing it by 15 minutes, did it one week and it didn't go so well so they put it back again and it's just stayed at 12.45 now for a few weeks. There is no end in sight; it's week by week, case by case.' (PC/7).

Typically, the parents/carers had little, or no, information regarding the legality of informal exclusion, or the processes governing the use of reduced timetables.

3.2.6.5 School refusal

Five of the interviewees raised issues related to school refusal by their children as a response to schools not putting in place sufficient, or appropriate support for them. In two of these cases, matters became so bad that the parents removed their child from the school. School refusal can have particular repercussions for parents/carers, as not ensuring their child's attendance at school can result in prosecution by local authority welfare services. However, children and young people with autism can be placed in a position where school refusal is their only option in the face of extreme anxiety. That anxiety may, in turn, be exacerbated by a school's failure to make reasonable adjustments in order to enable a child to access schooling. At its worst, a school's failure to make adjustments, leading to school refusal, can be seen as a form of exclusion.

One parent explained that although her son's school had not excluded him itself, it made little attempt to make adjustments, and that only once her son began to refuse to go to school did the school make adjustments:

‘They haven’t excluded him for anything, as in sent him home or anything like that but a lot of the lessons it took me a long, long time to get his adjustments in place because occupational therapist had come in and they ignored her advice for a bit, and [LA outreach team], and it took for him to refuse to go to school because he couldn’t cope for them to do anything.’ (PC/5)

This case was similar to that experienced by another parent, who explained:

‘My daughter wasn’t excluded but we went through a period of – I hate calling it school refusal – she refused to go, but she couldn’t go. And a lot of the techniques they were talking about [at the NAS exclusion seminar] that a school could potentially misuse in terms of it being an informal exclusion, were things that we were facing [in trying] to get her back into school.’ (PC/9)

The failure of schools to make reasonable adjustments also led to parents/carers removing their children from school, as was the case for a child who had faced exclusions, arising from challenging behaviour induced by the lack of support and adjustment. The grandparent of the child explained:

‘In the end the head teacher of the mainstream school was about to exclude him again and my daughter was called to the school and as he started to say “We’ll have to exclude him” she said “N, no, don’t say any more. I’m removing him” and just took him out of the school. So he was out of school then, that was at the end of Year 1, from about the beginning of July, so about 4 weeks before the end of term, right through to the October half term.’ (PC/12)

3.2.7 Parents/carers and the exclusions seminars

The exclusions project ran exclusions information seminars in six different months from April to November, 2016. An evaluation researcher attended two of the three seminars held in November, 2016, and recruited parents/carers from all three seminars held that month. Each seminar followed the same pattern, with the exclusions project worker providing an overview of the issues facing CYPA, and their parents/carers, in relation to school exclusions, and the threat of school exclusions. Topics covered included formal and informal exclusions, reduced timetables, exclusions from school trips, the legal framework governing exclusion, legal obligations on schools to make 'reasonable adjustments', schools and parents/carers working together, making the case for CYPA and their inclusion in school, and using AET materials to support working with schools. The presentation was followed by 30 minutes for questions and answers from the attendees. The seminars attended by the evaluation researcher were well conducted, well timed, and well received. Attendees had found out about the seminars through membership of the NAS (the seminars were hosted by local NAS groups), through Facebook, or word of mouth. Of the 59 attendees, 42 agreed to be contacted by the evaluation, and, of these, 16 were subsequently interviewed. This section of the report presents data on the attendees' views on the usefulness of the seminars, and of their impact.

3.2.7.1 *The usefulness of the seminars*

All the interviewees were very positive about the usefulness of the seminars, and the way in which the seminars were run. They thought that the seminars were well run, and pitched in the right way; as one parent/carer said: 'I found it very interesting, very useful, and I think it was handled very sensitively. Because it's a very emotive subject,' (PC/9). In terms of the content of the seminars, the interviewees identified a range of points that were covered which provided new, and valuable information for them. These points included: the pressures facing school head teachers, the importance of the Equality Act, 'reasonable adjustments', and issues relating to legal obligations on schools. Examples of parent/carer comments regarding these points are presented in 3.3.

3.3 Parents/carers and the usefulness of the exclusions seminars

'I think it both clarified and substantiated some of the let's say objectives and key areas that head teachers in particular are almost obsessed when it comes to being the head teacher of a school [...] It's clearly Ofsted reports, examination results. They're not really judged or measured it would seem by the extent or success of their Inclusion policy; it's more on examination results and Ofsted reports.' (PC/13).

'The whole thing about the Equality Act and the Disability Act I found very interesting, in that I went to look at a High School on the Friday as the seminar was on the Monday and if I'd have known some of the things I found out on the Monday that was what was discussed with me on the Friday I would have been pushing back with challenges which I wasn't aware of.' (PC/10).

'If I'd know that it was illegal for them to take him out of lessons rather than try and work with him then I definitely would have used that. And there's also the school trips, not allowing them on the school trips, because that also happened with him. So that would have been very handy to know with the phone call I had about not sending him in the next day.' (PC/8, on information picked up at seminar).

'I did not know the maximum number of days a school can exclude a child for. I did not know that temporary timetables are not really a well-considered thing by Ofsted etc. and the length of time my son has been on one and the programme that they've got him on isn't really satisfactory, for example, and just some other bits about the 2010 Equality Act; I knew a little bit about it but learnt some more about the Act itself and what it helps with. So yeah there was a lot of good information in there.' (PC/7)

'I didn't know about the reasonable adjustments. I didn't know that you could go in with [AET working with schools document] and go to [the AET] website he recommended. I have since done that to help my son be engaged just in the classroom generally.' (PC/5).

This data suggested that the seminars were effective in presenting important information that was new to many of those who attended.

3.2.7.2 The impact of the seminars

The interviewees were asked to give accounts of ways in which the seminars had a positive impact on their interaction with schools, and/or on benefits that their children had gained from the use of information provided in the seminars, or in other ways.

The most frequent example of impact (mentioned by six of the interviewees) was passing on information gained at the seminars to other parents/carers with CYPA. In addition, the interviewees were passing on links to the AET and NAS websites, and sharing seminar information on social media.

Four of the interviewees gave specific examples of when they had used knowledge gained at the seminars to challenge school action and policy. The challenges related to the use of reduced timetables for an indefinite period of time, bringing the concept of 'reasonable adjustments' to the attention of a head teacher, and, for two of the parents/carers, resisting demands that they repeatedly, and at very short notice, pick up their children from school early.

One example which related to repeated requests to collect a child, was given by a mother who said that she had experienced this on an almost daily basis, but, since attending the exclusions seminar, had questioned this school practice:

'Up until then [attending the seminar] I was getting a phone call practically on a daily basis saying could you just come and get him because we're not... I was then going down and nine times out of ten just bringing him home. It was only on that course that actually I realised that's illegal. They can't just do that. So I think the main

reason he got the exclusion was I said no I'm not going to pick him up unless this is a formal exclusion. So I think that kind of backed them into a bit of a corner and I just felt actually you can't keep just saying we're not coping. (PC/2).

Although her child had been excluded because she refused to immediately pick him up from school, the mother saw this as a form of success, as it was getting the school to reconsider its position on repeated temporary, and unrecorded, exclusion. The same parent also used knowledge from the exclusions seminar to argue that her son should attend a school trip, (see case study 2).

Case Study 2: Using knowledge from the Exclusions Seminar to enable inclusion

'They [the school] said he couldn't go on the school trip and all this, whereas we've fought that now and he is going on the school trip, which is in a month. And if I hadn't heard him [the exclusions speakers] talk about that, I probably wouldn't have fought it as much but I was so angry after listening about it and other people were saying "oh yes my child wasn't allowed to go". And I just said actually he wants to go. It's completely his kind of thing, because it's like an activity weekend, but they were saying "No he's too unpredictable. We can't risk him going unless you go with him and then he can go and stay with you somewhere different." And we were just like absolutely no way. They've said now he can go and do like a pre-visit, which I'm happy to do, but then I spoke to [name] about it and he said "I don't want to do that. I've looked at the map and I know where I'm going. I don't want to. I want to go with my friends and it be a surprise for them". So if that's what he wants I felt a bit like now they're trying to force us to do something again that he doesn't really want to do.' (PC/2)

The interviewees all noted that working with schools, even with the information gained at the seminars, was a slow process, but that having access to the information, and to information on the AET and NAS websites, helped to maintain their ability to continue to

argue for full inclusion. The value of that information was recognised by the parents/carers who shared both the presentation PowerPoint slides, and website details, with other parents/carers in similar situations.

3.3 Summary

The evaluation data showed that the Exclusions Project was, overall, successful in meeting its targets with regard to the numbers of parents/carers engaged, April 2016 – March, 2017. For each deliverable, with the exception of telephone/e-mail and volunteer support (824 reached out of planned total of 1000), the planned numbers of parents/carers to be reached by each method had been exceeded by the end of March 2017. In terms of the volunteer support, the year-end total was 221, out of the target of 400. This, in fact, represents a success, as only one volunteer was recruited, trained, and began the role. For all other deliverables, the targets were exceeded, with 57 parents/carers reached in three autism shows (target of 30); 309 parents/carers reached in six seminars (target of 90); along with 9503 reached via the webpage.

The parent/carer interview data, based on 21 interviews with 16 parents/carers suggested that exclusions-related issues experienced by those parents/carers and the CYPA were much as identified by prior NAS work. The interviewees had faced six main issues in relation to exclusions: lack of understanding of autism on the part of schools and school staff; unwillingness of schools to make 'reasonable adjustments' for pupils with autism; poor communications between school and home; the use of informal exclusions by schools; and school refusal as a form of exclusion.

The parent/carer data showed a high level of satisfaction with the seminars run by the Exclusions Project, the information gained at those seminars, and the usefulness of that information in supporting parents/carers in their dealings with schools around exclusions. The data also included examples of where parents/carers had been able to use Exclusions Project information soon after attending the seminars, illustrating impact.

4. Supporting the Move from School to College (2016-17)

4.1 Supporting the Move from School to College and the evaluation

4.1.1 Introduction: the project, Supporting the Move from School to College

The AET Programme 2016-17 aimed to link the existing AET Post-16 training offer with Ambitious about Autism's (AaA) 'Succeeding at College'⁹ programme. This new offer was entitled, 'Supporting the Move from School to College'. The expectation was that this element of the AET Programme 2016-17 would encompass:

- i. Production of a manual on the use of the AET approach for colleges based on the AET guide for LAs and schools, and developed and expanded to integrate the existing Succeeding at College guidance.
- ii. A special one day session in each of the 9 regions providing:
 - Free Tier 1.
 - Dissemination of Succeeding at College training.
 - Information about AET Tier 2 and 3 and Succeeding at College.
 - Succeeding at College training and guidance.
- iii. Development and delivery of Post-16 conference in London for 200 college based leaders and staff disseminating AET training and P-16 materials and linked Succeeding at College offer targeting transition issues.
- iv. Development of training packages for regional and national events and revision of AET Post-16 training packages to integrate packages for regional and national events, and revision of AET Post-16 training packages to integrate Succeeding at College links.

⁹ Bakopoulou, Ioanna and Cullen, Mairi Ann (2016) [*Evaluation of the Succeeding at College project for Ambitious about Autism, 2015-2016: final report*](#). Coventry: University of Warwick. Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research.

- v. Integration, co-ordination and dissemination of Post-16 programme, including marketing initiative. This will also include developing broader partnerships with the sector that will participate in regional hubs.

4.1.1 The evaluation.

The focus of the evaluation was on elements ii and iii above. In addition to recorded, and fully transcribed, interviews with the project lead, data was collected at the following Supporting the Move from School to College events: Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Evaluation data collected in relation to Supporting the Move from School to College

| Event | Evaluation researcher in attendance | Data collected |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| Regional training, Norwich, 22 Sept 2016. (Materials run-through) | Yes. | 3 matched pairs, pre & post training questionnaires. |
| Regional training, Surrey, two half day events on 12 December, 2016. | Yes. | 16 matched pairs, pre & post training questionnaires. |
| Regional training, Blackpool & the Fylde, 17 January, 2017. | No. | 19 matched pairs, pre & post training questionnaires. |
| Regional training, Birmingham, 6 February, 2017 | Yes. | 46 matched pairs, pre & post training questionnaires. |
| Regional training, Devon, 8 February, 2017. | Yes. | 23 matched pairs, pre & post training questionnaires. |
| Regional training, Blackpool & the Fylde, 10 February, 2017. | No. | 35 matched pairs, pre & post training questionnaires. |

| | | |
|---|------|---|
| Regional training, Yorkshire & Humber, 13 March, 2017. | No. | 12 matched pairs, pre & post training questionnaires. |
| Regional training, London, 15 March, 2017. | No. | 16 matched pairs, pre & post training questionnaires. |
| Regional training, Yorkshire & Humber, 21 March. | No. | 16 matched pairs, pre & post training questionnaires. |
| Total number of matched pairs, pre & post-training questionnaires: 186. | | |
| National Conference, London, 24 March, 2017. | Yes. | Observations & document collection. |

4.2 Supporting the Move from School to College: events

4.2.1 Nine training events

The 'Supporting the move from school to college' events were aimed at staff working with young people with autism through transition. The events aimed to:

- Provide attendees with approaches and strategies to support transition.
- Enhance understanding about how to build partnerships with key stakeholders.
- Help attendees to identify actions to support young people on the autism spectrum to complete a successful transition from school to college.

There were nine events with a varying number of questionnaires completed as shown in Table 4.2. In total there were 186 questionnaires that were at least partially completed. Of those who answered the questions, 44% had a management role.

Table 4.2 Events and matched pair questionnaires

| Event | Number of Questionnaires (matched pre & post event pairs) |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Norwich | 3 |
| Surrey | 16 |
| Birmingham | 46 |
| Devon | 23 |
| Blackpool and The Fylde - January | 19 |
| Blackpool and The Fylde - February | 35 |
| London | 16 |
| Yorkshire & the Humber: York | 12 |
| Yorkshire & the Humber: Scarborough | 16 |
| Total | 186 |

Job/role of delegates:

Over 70 different job roles were covered by the 186 attendees who completed a questionnaire. The main roles were:

- Senior Leadership, SENCOs, Autism Specialists, Learning Support, Wellbeing and Mental Health, Curriculum, Careers, and Pastoral.

This range of roles was as expected, given the target audience of the project.

(Data in the following tables is presented in percentages.)

Table 4.3 delegates' assessment of existing position in their settings, pre-event

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|----------------------|----------|----------------------------------|-------|-------------------|
| 2a) I am confident that the setting I work in has good autism support in place for its young people. N=183 | 3 | 2 | 19 | 33 | 44 |
| 2b) The setting I work in has autism education training for all staff. N=180 | 5 | 13 | 21 | 25 | 36 |
| 2c) I am confident that the setting I work in has a good understanding of its legal requirements in supporting students with autism; for example, under the Children & Families Act, 2014. N=181 | 4 | 5 | 15 | 25 | 51 |
| 2d) I am aware of the importance of working with others to support young people with autism in my setting. N=184 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 17 | 75 |
| 2e) I have a good understanding of the needs of young people with autism. N=183 | 2 | 7 | 17 | 39 | 36 |
| 2f) I have a good understanding of how to build local partnerships | 2 | 16 | 38 | 26 | 18 |

to help support students with autism. N=183

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|----|----|----|
| 2g) I have a good understanding of the possible impact of the learning environment on students with autism. N=184 | 2 | 3 | 13 | 35 | 48 |
|---|---|---|----|----|----|

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|----|----|----|
| 2h) I am confident that the setting I work in has good procedures in place to enable successful transition from school to college, and college onwards, for students with autism. N=180 | 2 | 6 | 27 | 38 | 27 |
|---|---|---|----|----|----|

The item that received the most overall positive response was 2d) with 92%, regarding being aware of the importance of working with others to support young people with autism. The item with the least positive response was 2f), with 44% positive and 18% overall negative, regarding understanding how to build local partnerships to help support students with autism. There was also an 18% negative response to item 2b), regarding their setting having autism training for all staff. The positive response to this was 61%. Although delegates, overall, were largely confident that they, and their settings, were in a strong position regarding autism support, there were, nonetheless, areas where they were less confident, particularly in respect of building local partnerships, the needs of young people with autism, and the provision of whole-setting autism training.

The vast majority had experience of working with one or more learners on the autism spectrum (93%). Attendees were also asked about how much training they had previously received about understanding autism. The results are shown in Table 4.4

Table 4.4 delegates' prior autism training

| Autism Training duration | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| None | 15 |
| Short Session | 21 |
| 1 day | 20 |
| 2 days | 10 |
| More than 2 days | 34 |
| N=183 | |

The post-event questionnaire for the delegates to the Supporting the Move from School to College asked their views on how useful and worthwhile the training had been (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5, post-event views on the training

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Post1a) It was worthwhile. N=171 | 1 | 2 | 12 | 22 | 63 |
| Post1b) It increased my knowledge of autism. N=171 | 5 | 7 | 23 | 25 | 40 |
| Post1c) It highlighted the strengths in my setting's current practice in relation to students with autism. N=171 | 1 | 2 | 12 | 32 | 53 |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|----|----|----|----|
| Post1d) It highlighted the weaknesses in my setting's current practice in relation to students with autism. N=170 | 8 | 10 | 16 | 28 | 39 |
| Post1e) It provided me with practical strategies in relation to autism provision in my setting. N=171 | 2 | 8 | 24 | 33 | 34 |
| Post1f) It has made me aware of at least one positive change I/we could easily make to benefit our students with autism. N=171 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 28 | 61 |
| Post1g) It has made me aware of the need for more work to be done by my setting to support students with autism. N=171 | 2 | 8 | 19 | 29 | 43 |
| Post1h) It made me interested in undertaking more training in relation to autism support. N=171 | 1 | 5 | 17 | 28 | 50 |

The attendees were most positive about item 1f) with 89%, regarding being made aware of at least one positive change they could make to benefit their students with autism. Items 1a) (it was worthwhile) and 1c) (the training highlighted the strengths in their setting's current practice) both had 85% overall positive and only 3% negative responses. The item with the largest negative response with 18% was 1d), regarding the training highlighting their settings weaknesses in relation to students with autism - 67% were positive about this statement, believing that the training highlighted weaknesses in the respondents' setting's current practice in relation to students with autism.

Attendees were asked to write down one positive change that they hoped to make because of the event and they were also given the opportunity to write down any comments they had about the event as a whole. 158 wrote down a positive change and 102 wrote an open comment. With the positive changes, four main themes came out from them:

- Changes to individual practice.
- Changes to whole-setting practice.
- Spreading the learning from the training to colleagues.
- Communicating with stakeholders; that is liaising with schools/colleges, communicating with parents, families, and SEND students, networking.

Examples of these are given in Boxes 1 – 4.

Box 1 Illustrative examples of intended changes to individual practice

‘Thinking more holistically about the learner journey from their perspective. Fine tuning/differentiating.’

‘As an assessor I will consider the environment in the assessment room and make adjustments when assessing students with ASD.’

‘Ensure that any changes to any routine are explained and understood.’

‘Be more conscientious of the changes in class timetables for my students and helping them overcome this.’

‘Using the 6 second rule when asking questions and only asking one question at a time.’

‘To provide more specific structure to lessons for students so that they feel more secure and will have a better understanding.’

‘Differentiating classroom for individual students, re lighting, noise, etc. Not waiting until the student's issues become so great they can no longer engage with the course.’

‘Photographs of key people linked to where in the building to find them.’

Box 2 Illustrative examples of intended changes to whole-setting practice

‘A green room place for students to go to chill out or do quiet work. Set up 2 one page profiles for individual students that learning support and tutors can access.’

‘I would like to introduce visual timetables for ASD students across the college.’

‘Provide more extensive transition support from Year 9, and not leaving it to Year 11.’

Box 3 Illustrative examples of intentions to spread the learning from event

‘Discussion with in house careers advisors on way to better support our ASD pupils moving on.’

‘Teachers to be more aware of Autism and how it affects students on a day to day basis - to circulate information.’

‘Take the training back to campus, to ensure all members of the team (those who currently do not have a person with autism on their course) are fully aware of how to differentiate.’

‘Share insights and knowledge with other staff members. Review sensory experience for students in the classroom.’

Box 4 Illustrative examples of intention to communicate with stakeholders

‘Being more proactive in communicating with colleges.’

‘Passing on information during transition out of college.’

‘Work with students to create one page profiles specific to transitioning to college and the liaising with colleges/sixth form to share information on students.’

‘See students/parents very much earlier before they start applying for sixth form to introduce the sixth form team and offer any help needed.’

‘I will be linking up with 2 other secondary settings in the local area to create a 'transition group' of year 11s to access some transition work together. Try to form student relationships/life skills/ transport before next phase of education.’

‘Sit with my student and formulate a structured "countdown" to the GCSE exams in May - i.e. things to do, when.’

Box 5 Illustrative examples of open comments

‘Well worthwhile would recommend it to colleagues.’

‘Well presented, fully inclusive and flowing. Thank you.’

‘Very informative. Not only gave me ideas for student with Autism but all students with SEN.’

‘Excellent training for improving transition and outcomes for young people. A lot covered in a short time.’

‘Reiterated the positive things we already do as an organisation.’

‘It was a positive experience to meet others on the course and see how their work role fits in to the 'autistic picture'. To share ideas and learn what others do.’

4.2.2 AET Post-16 National Conference

The project held a Post-16 National Conference in London, on 24th March, 2017. A researcher from the evaluation attended the conference, and the following is the researcher’s observation report from that event:

There were 32 attendees at the event, mostly comprising staff from schools (be that special schools or those with a special unit). There were a few college staff and a Local Authority representative.

There was a range of different speakers including: a former OFSTED inspector, a panel of young people with autism, a DfE representative and those involved with the Autism Education Trust (AET).

The introduction highlighted the low percentage of young people with autism who end up in paid work and their high exclusion rate from schools. The idea of regional networks was also mentioned as it was acknowledged that training is not enough, and that there needs to be a way for people to contact each other for advice and ideas.

The AET Young People's Panel (YPP) were the first main presentation after the introduction. This helped to place the event in context as they discussed what they had found difficult about school and also what had helped them with their transition. In all cases it was a member of staff who had taken the time to understand what they needed to cope, for example having a laminated card to give to a staff member when then needed a time-out break and a room where they could go for this. There was time provided for questions. It benefitted the event having the YPP to open the event, as it focused the event on the central issue of supporting young people with their transition post-16.

The Department for Education (DfE) presented on EHC plans and the importance of timeliness in being issued. The audience were informed that 'Learning Disability Assessments (LDAs)' for post-16s should not exist anymore, as they should have been converted to EHC plans. There was discussion of the Local Offer and how there should be a preparing for adulthood section. There was also mention of the 'Tell us once' idea which relates to parents not having to repeat themselves every time their child moves school. In addition, there was a focus on the idea that once children are in Year 9 there should be measures in place to start planning for adult life and moving on from school. There was also endorsement of the AET by the DfE and why this is a consistent framework and high quality training, with a broad range of support materials, which supports networking.

A former OFSTED inspector discussed inclusion and inclusive practice. Previous policy was discussed and how the new SEND code of Practice and the Children and Families Act (2014) had changed the focus to being aspirational, achieving and making progress. She talked about the variability in quality of EHC plans, and the lack of support, knowledge, and training for those who work with young people with complex needs.

After lunch the new training module for the AET post-16 was introduced. It follows a similar pattern to the other training modules with four sections. There was a brief overview of each section and there were also some videos. The 'Finished at School' self-audit tool from Ambitious About Autism was shown, as the Post-16 module builds on this. There was time for questions.

4.3 Summary

The Supporting the Move from School to College project met all its output targets, producing a manual, and training package incorporating the AET Post-16 training and the AAA's Succeeding at College programme. The new Supporting the Move from School to College offer was piloted at nine regional training events across England (September 2016 – March, 2017), and a London-based national Post-16 conference was also held in March, 2017.

The evaluation collected a range of data, including 186 pre and post training event matched pair questionnaires completed by training event delegates. That data showed that a broad range of relevant autism-related roles were recruited to the pilot events, including senior leadership, SENCOs, autism specialists, learning support, wellbeing and mental health, curriculum, careers, and pastoral staff from schools and colleges. The delegates were, overall, strongly positive about the training, with, for example, 89% being made aware by the training of at least one positive change that could be made to benefit students with autism, while 67% felt that the training highlighted weaknesses in the respondents' setting's

current practice in relation to students with autism. Delegates also provided clear statements about specific changes that they intended to pursue in order to improve autism support in their settings, as a result of learning from the training.

5. The Regional Networks

5.1 The Regional Networks and the Evaluation

5.1.1 Introduction, the project: Regional Networks

The AET Programme 2016-17 envisaged the creation of five new Regional Networks to support the implementation of the AET Programme. The AET Programme 2016-17 provided £10k to each of five Regional Networks to support schools and Local Authorities (LAs) using the AET materials to improve autism education. Five regional AET hubs were chosen by competitive tender to set up regional networks to support the Programme, including the use of the AET Standards and Competency Framework, and to follow-up and support the impact of AET training to settings. Each Regional Network was expected to deliver the following:

- i. Four regional network meetings for LAs and schools. School and LA representatives will be able to attend free of charge.
- ii. An overview of the AET offer: training and online materials.
- iii. Workshop or follow-up sessions at the regional meetings on using the AET offer for:
 - a. School improvement and preparing for Ofsted.
 - b. Quality assuring provision.
 - c. To support staff development through the use of the AET schools competency framework.
 - d. To structure support service delivery, and as part of the local offer.
 - e. Opportunities to share their own practice, approaches and materials.
 - f. The production of a business plan that will sustain the network, post March 2017.

One of the five regions, West Midlands, had previously, in 2015-16, offered regional network events on the lines described above, and, in consequence, were expected to offer network events that were developments of their earlier offerings.

5.1.2 The evaluation

It was initially expected that all the Regional Network meetings would be offered by the end of February, 2017. The intention of the evaluation was for a researcher to attend two events from each Regional Network, i.e., ten of the expected 20 meetings. Pre and post event questionnaires were to be administered at all events, ten by an evaluation researcher, and ten by the network organisers. In addition, delegates at the ten events attended by the evaluation would be invited to take part in later, follow-up, telephone interviews to help assess the longer-term impact of attendance. The evaluation work was, therefore, largely conditional on the activities of the Regional Networks. In the event, some Regional Networks were delayed, and their meetings did not take place until too late for inclusion in the evaluation. By 20th March, 2017, the evaluation had attended seven Regional Network events, gathered 216 questionnaires (matched pairs), and carried out 15 follow-up interviews with delegates from the five earliest Regional Network meetings. In addition, the five Regional Network leads were interviewed in September and November 2016, with further data collected from them in March, 2017. Details of data collection are presented in table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Evaluation data collected in relation to the five Regional Networks

| Activity | Data Collected |
|--|--|
| Interviews with Regional Network leads | 5 recorded & transcribed interviews |
| West Midlands Regional Network meetings: | |
| 28 Nov 2016 (two meetings) | 46 pre & post matched questionnaires & 8 follow-up delegate interviews, carried out in January/February, 2017. |
| 6 March 2017 (two meetings) | 79 pre & post matched questionnaires |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>South-West Regional Network meetings:</p> <p>31 January 2017</p> <p>20 March 2017</p> | <p>42 pre & post matched questionnaires & 7 follow-up delegate interviews, carried out in February, 2017.</p> <p>21 pre & post matched questionnaires.</p> |
| <p>East Midlands Regional Network meetings:</p> <p>8 March 2017</p> <p><i>(Further, post-evaluation, meetings planned for: 23 March, 30 March)</i></p> | <p>28 pre & post matched questionnaires</p> |
| <p>Eastern Region Regional Network meetings:</p> <p>(1 February 2017 – evaluation not notified)</p> <p><i>(Further, post-evaluation, meetings planned for: 31 March, 24 April, 15 May)</i></p> | <p>N/A</p> |
| <p>London Region Regional Network meetings:</p> <p>(Two before end of January, 2016 – evaluation not notified)</p> <p><i>(Further, post-evaluation, meetings planned for April, 2017).</i></p> | <p>N/A</p> |

The data presented here is presented by each Regional Network event (in an anonymised form). Within the overall requirements of the contract for delivery of the Regional Network meetings, each contracted region (West Midlands, South-West, East Midlands, Eastern Region, and London) was free to meet local requirements; for example, a meeting might be aimed at school leaders, specialist practitioners, or school governors. In consequence, the detail of content, and delivery, varied from region to region, and meeting to meeting. The data presented refers only to the seven Regional Network meetings, held by three of the Regions, identified in Table 5.1.

5.2 Aims, audiences, and content, of the Regional Network meetings

The data presented in this section is drawn from the interviews with the leads of the hubs which delivered Regional Network meetings, and notified the evaluation of those events, before 21 March, 2017.

5.2.1 Developing Regional Networks

For the AET Hub leads who were responsible for organising and developing the Regional Networks, the project had a number of perceived benefits. These were:

- A natural extension of existing networking by the hub.
- An opportunity to create lead practitioner networks in the region.
- An opportunity to create senior leadership networks in the region.
- A way of starting local networks in the region and providing initial support prior to the networks becoming autonomous and self-sustaining.
- A way of enhancing the 'marketing' of the AET training offer.
- Widening the geographic reach of the AET hub.
- A way of embedding the AET Standards and Competency Framework in settings.
- A forum for showcasing good autism practice by schools which have embedded AET training.

The leads all took the view that establishing Regional Networks would be good for raising the profile of AET training, for extending the reach of the Hubs, for embedding good autism practice in schools, and for enabling various types of practitioner and leadership support networks to grow.

One of the Hubs, West Midlands, ran a series of Network events during 2015-16, which, in effect, acted as a pilot for the 2016-17 project. The lead was, therefore, able to reflect on that work, and its outcomes. The lead explained that the original concept for a Hub initiative in relation to a Regional Network came out of the use of sub-contractors to deliver AET

training in other Local Authority (LA) areas in the region. Supporting sub-contractor delivery brought into being a small, sub-contractor/Hub network, which, in turn, led to two conferences. These 'generated interest, because what those conferences did was to present how we were using it [the AET training], which we did through setting up little workshops, and each of the units in the guidance, they were written up,' (L1). This led to termly meetings with the stakeholder LAs, where 'we brainstormed what was going on, what was going well, and what the issues were, and how we could all improve,' (L1). The usefulness of these meetings provide the impetus for the 2016-17 project.

5.2.2 Content of Regional Network meetings

This section provides two examples of the ways in which the Regional Network events were focused at different audiences, and the content of each of those sessions. Each event incorporated an introductory element focusing on the 'Raising Awareness' tier of the AET training programme. Beyond that requirement, the organising hubs were free to construct the events in order to meet the expected interest of the specific audience.

The first example was of a Regional Network event that was aimed at school governors; Box 6: Regional Network event I:

Box 6: Regional Network event I.

Programme of the day:

- Welcome and introduction.
- Introduction to the AET, its remit and work – Director of the AET.
- 'Raising Awareness' – training taster.
- Parent Voice – an educational journey from a family's perspective.
- Refreshments and time for networking.

- Using the AET Framework to support senior leaders and governors meet statutory duties.
- SENCo Voice – reflecting on the implementation and impact of AET training at school level
- Governor Voice – reflecting in implementation and impact.
- Q&A, summary.

The second example was taken from a different region, and was a half-day event aimed at a school senior leaders and governors; Box 7: Regional Network event II:

Box 7: Regional Network event II

Programme:

- Introduction to the AET, its remit and work – Director of the AET.
- Using the AET Programme to support Senior Leaders & school governors.
- Implementation and impact of the AET Programme at a school in the region.
- Refreshments and time for networking.
- An introduction to AET ‘Raising Awareness’ training.
- Autism speaker.
- Q&A, close.

5.3 Delegate views of the Regional Network meetings

5.3.1 Introduction

This section presents the findings from seven Regional Network events, drawing upon the pre and post-event questionnaires delivered at each event. As the focus and content of each

event was different, the questionnaires that were administered were specific to each event. In addition to the findings from the closed questions from each questionnaire, data is also presented from the open questions, in a themed fashion.

5.3.2 Regional Network event A

The focus of this event was on local area SEND OFSTED inspections and time was provided for delegates to network among themselves and with a member of the Autism outreach team hosting the event. There were 19 respondents to the pre-event questionnaire and 18 also completed, or partially completed the post-event questionnaire. Twelve of those attending had a management role. Results are reported as actual numbers rather than percentages, given that less than 50 matched pair questionnaires were collected. Generally they are reported as overall positive ('Agree' plus 'Strongly agree') or overall negative ('Disagree' plus 'Strongly disagree').

Job/role of delegates:

- Four Educational Psychologists (some senior).
- Three Advisory Teachers.
- Two Specialist SEND Teachers.
- Three ASD Team co-ordinators and 1 Assistant Area Manager for Specialist Teaching Services.
- Three Heads or Managers of Autism Outreach Services.
- Two LA staff: one SEND monitoring and provision and one SEND casework officer.

Settings:

Attendees worked in eight different LAs from around the region.

Table 5.2 Pre-event questionnaire responses

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| 2a) I am confident that my service has a good understanding of the Local Area SEND Inspection process. | 0 | 2 | 10 | 6 | 1 |
| 2b) My service has reflected on the autism focus within the SEND Ofsted reports in the Local Area. | 1 | 5 | 10 | 1 | 2 |
| 2c) My service is aware of how using the AET programme can support autism teams to evidence Local Authority provision for the inspection process. | 0 | 3 | 7 | 8 | 1 |
| 2d) My service is aware of how the AET programme can inform a wide range of audiences with the Local Authority. | 0 | 1 | 6 | 8 | 4 |
| 2e) My service has a robust plan in place for the future implementation of the AET programme. * | 2 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 2 |

* 1 missing data

There were negative responses for each of the first set of questions which asked respondents to think about where they worked. More attendees responded negatively to item 2b) which was about their service having reflected on the autism focus within the SEND Ofsted reports (6/19) than positively. Item 2e) which was about their service having a robust plan in place for future implementation of the AET programme, had equal numbers of positive and negative responses (7/18). The largest positive response was to item 2d), with their services being aware of how the AET programme can inform a wide range of audiences with the LA (12/19).

Table 5.3 Post-event questionnaire responses

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Post 1a) Today's event has helped me to understand the Local Area SEND Inspection process.* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 10 |
| Post 1b) Today's event has helped me to reflect on the autism focus within the Local Area SEND Ofsted reports. ** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 13 |
| Post 1c) Today's event gave me a good insight into how using the AET programme can support autism teams to evidence Local Authority provision for the inspection process. ** | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 11 |
| Post 1d) Today's event showed me how the AET programme | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 12 |

can inform a wide range of audiences with the Local Authority. **

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Post 1e) Today's event gave me time to reflect on next steps for my organisation regarding the implementation of the AET programme. ** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 9 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|----|---|
| Post 1f) At today's event, I was able to share with colleagues, and hear of, best practice in the region. *** | 0 | 0 | 1 | 10 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|----|---|

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Post 1g) At today's event, I made good, new contacts with colleagues in the region. *** | 0 | 0 | 5 | 7 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

* 1 missing data. ** 2 missing data, *** 3 missing data

There were no negative responses to the post-event questionnaire, and three of the items were entirely positive: a (the event helping them to understand the Local Area SEND Inspection process), b (the event helping them to reflect on the autism focus within the Local Area SENS OFSTED reports), and e (the event providing them time to reflect on next steps for their organisation). Item 1g), regarding making new contacts had the fewest positive responses with 11 out 16.

Open responses were asked for on the post-event questionnaire. Attendees were asked to state one positive change that they hoped to make and were also asked for any comments relating to the event. There were 15 positive change comments and 10 open comments, a selection of which are presented in Boxes 8 and 9, respectively. Statements were selected by their perceived importance by the researcher and also how specific they were.

Box 8 Illustrative comments about positive changes the attendee hopes to make as a result of the Regional Network Meeting

- 'To establish a 'storyboard' to go with existing evidence for the local area inspection.'
- 'Discuss AET programme with manager in relation to strategic changes taking place and how this might fit.'
- 'Ensure that parents are more aware of local offer and push to ensure they know how to access it.'

Box 9 Illustrative positive comments about the Regional Network Meeting

- 'I have learned a plethora of useful information, which I hope to not only inform my own practice, but to embellish the Specialist Teaching service with too.'
- 'Good to focus on area inspection in relation to AET'
- 'Opportunity to review provision - to support our management of change.'

5.3.2 Regional Network event B

Regional Network event B was aimed at school Governors, and provided:

- An overview of the AET programme.
- How the framework can be used to support senior leaders and governors.
- What AET Tier 1 (schools) training looks like.
- A SENCO from a local school talked about the impact of the AET programme on her setting.
- A guest speaker who is an adult with autism, who discussed his schooling.

The pre-event questionnaire was completed by 73 attendees. Three additional participants completed a post-event questionnaire and there were 62 matched pairs overall. There was

missing data from every question, ranging from 3-12 missing for each; percentages are used in all tables. Of the 69 who responded, 51% had a management role.

Job/role of delegates:

- The majority of attendees were school Governors (52/73 – 71%), with 12 being the Chair of Governors and 3 the Vice-Chair.
- 10 SENCOs.
- Three Head teachers, 4 Assistant Head teachers, and 1 Deputy Head.
- Three Inclusion managers.
- Two class teachers.
- One school support manager.
- One specialist teacher.
- One Enhanced Resource Provision (ERP) manager.

(Some of the above put two options, e.g. SENCO/Governor so they have been included in both totals.)

Settings:

- The biggest number of the attendees worked in a primary school (24/65 – 37%)
- Seven were from a special school
- Four were from a secondary school
- Two were from independent mainstream schools, one was from an independent special school
- Two were from a primary school with an ERP/specialist provision, one was from a Pupil referral Unit (PRU)

- One was from Higher Education
- Six just stated mainstream school, two put school with resource base
- 12 were not specific about what type of setting they worked in

Table 5.4 Pre-event questionnaire responses

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|----------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|-------|-------------------|
| 2a) I am confident that the setting I work in has good autism support in place for its children and young people. *N=70 | 1 | 3 | 21 | 36 | 39 |
| 2b) I am confident that the setting I work in has an effective staff development plan in place with regards to autism support. **N=69 | 0 | 4 | 33 | 35 | 28 |
| 2c) I am confident that the setting I work in has an effective school/setting improvement plan in place with regards to autism support. **N=69 | 0 | 9 | 35 | 33 | 23 |
| 2d) The setting I work in is part of a good, existing, network which helps support | 0 | 9 | 35 | 30 | 26 |

my setting's autism strategy.

**N=69

2e) The setting I work in has a clear idea of the support it can draw from the LA. *N=70

* 6 missing data, ** 7 missing data

There were few negative responses to the pre-event questions in Table 4. 75% of respondents were positive about item 2a), being confident that their setting had good autism support in place. Items 2c) (confidence that setting has an effective school/setting improvement plan) and 2d) (setting is part of a good, existing, network which helps support autism strategy) had the same percentage who disagreed, were neutral or were overall positive: 9%, 35% and 36% respectively.

Table 5.5 Post-event questionnaire responses

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Post 1a) Today's event gave me a good understanding of the AET programme offer. *N=65 | 5 | | 11 | 26 | 59 |
| Post 1b) Today's event provided important information in relation to using the AET programme to support | 3 | 2 | 8 | 35 | 52 |

senior leaders and
governors.*N=65

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| Post 1c) Today's event provided important information about school/setting implementation in relation to autism support.**N=64 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 45 | 41 |
|---|---|---|---|----|----|

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|----|----|
| Post 1d) Today's event provided important information about staff training. *N=65 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 35 | 51 |
|--|---|---|---|----|----|

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|----|----|----|
| Post 1e) At today's event, I was able to share with colleagues, and to hear of, best practice in the region. ***N=63 | 2 | 8 | 32 | 33 | 25 |
|---|---|---|----|----|----|

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|----|----|----|
| Post 1f) Today's event provided me with information about how using the AET can support senior leaders and governors fulfil statutory duties. *N=65 | 2 | 3 | 11 | 39 | 46 |
|--|---|---|----|----|----|

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| Post 1g) Today's event provided information in relation to the impact of AET materials, which support senior leaders and governors, in a school. *N=65 | 2 | 5 | 9 | 42 | 43 |
|---|---|---|---|----|----|

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|----|----|
| Post 1h) At today's event I was | 5 | 3 | 14 | 79 |
| able to hear the perspective of | | | | |
| someone with autism | | | | |
| regarding their life and | | | | |
| schooling. *N=65 | | | | |

*11 missing data, ** 12 missing data, *** 13 missing data

There were more overall negative responses for each question after the event than before. 93% were positive about item 1h) in response to hearing the perspective of someone with autism. The rest of the items had in the least, an 85% positive response, except for item 1e) which had 58% positive, regarding the event enabling people to share with colleagues and to hear of best practice in the region. This item had the highest neutral response, of 32% and the highest negative response, of 10%. The high numbers of missing data are perhaps due to a number of delegates leaving during the coffee break rather than staying until the end in an attempt to avoid city centre traffic.

Open responses were asked for on the post-event questionnaire. Attendees were asked to state one positive change that they hoped to make and were also asked for any comments relating to the event. There were 58 positive change comments which reflect a few themes, a selection of which are presented in Boxes 10 and 11, respectively. Statements were chosen by perceived importance by the researcher and also how specific they were.

Box 10 Illustrative comments about positive changes regarding training

- 'As a SEND governor I will suggest that we undertake some of the AET training for all staff. I will be discussing with SENCO the adaptations to the environment in order to support the autistic child. I will also discuss the possibility of undertaking the AET audit.'
- 'Discuss training and in particular what happens with new staff'

- 'I think to discuss everything I have learned today with my school's SENCO to make sure (1) all staff have at least basic (Tier 1) training, (2) the school can make necessary changes if needed and to understand the school's capacity for training etc.'
- 'Check with school that they have recently undertaken Tier 1 training for all staff.'
- 'Look at who the lead practitioners are. What we can do to support the children in class. Going to do a learning walk. See what's in classrooms.'

Box 11 Illustrative positive comments about the Regional Network Meeting

- 'Thoroughly enjoyable and informative. Liked to hear the perspective of another SENCO too. Can this be run again please - our governors and Head would find this useful!'
- 'Thank you. Really motivating.'
- 'AET is a great source and should be used by all school/SEND professionals'
- 'Very useful reminder of a good programme of support.'
- 'Wonderful speakers that are knowledgeable'

5.3.2 Regional Network event C

This was a free regional launch and networking event aimed at Local Authority commissioners, SEND and Inclusion leads, LA autism leads, SENCOs and Head teachers. The AET programme was introduced and there was a presentation on how it has been used in one LA. There were workshops depending upon what age group the delegates worked with and then presentations about school inspections and future network planning. There were 55 respondents who completed at least part of the pre-event questionnaire. 13 did not complete the post-event questionnaire. All data is presented as actual numbers rather than percentages due to missing data.

Job/role of delegates:

- Five were advisory teachers and four were SENCOs

- The rest had a wide variety of roles some of which included:
 - Head teacher, Assistant Head, Early Support Worker, HLTA, Specialist Practitioner, Lead for Complex Communication Needs, SEBD Advisor, Outreach worker, and Manager for Autism Family Support Service.

Settings (One person did not respond):

- 12 were from a primary school.
- Six from secondary school.
- Five from a college.
- 11 from special schools or alternative provision.
- 10 in all age settings.
- Three in Early Years settings.
- Four Local Authority employees.
- One who worked in both primary and secondary settings.
- Six worked in a different setting including:
 - Opportunity group, SENDIAS, Outreach services, advisory service, SEN specialist services, SENSS.

(There were four attendees who selected a setting and then described it further so they have been added to both counts where appropriate).

Table 5.6 Pre-event questionnaire

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|----------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|-------|-------------------|
| I am confident that the setting I work in has good autism support in place for its children and young people. *N=55 | 0 | 5 | 9 | 17 | 16 |
| I am confident that the setting I work in has an effective staff development plan in place with regards to autism support. *N=55 | 0 | 8 | 14 | 17 | 8 |
| I am confident that the setting I work in has an effective school improvement plan in place with regards autism support. ***N=55 | 0 | 9 | 13 | 14 | 7 |
| The setting I work in is part of a good, existing, network which helps support my setting's autism strategy. **N=55 | 2 | 6 | 14 | 12 | 12 |
| The setting I work in has a clear idea of the support it can draw from the LA. ***N=55 | 1 | 8 | 8 | 19 | 7 |

*8 missing data, ** 9 missing data, ***12 missing data

Table 5.7 Post-event questionnaire

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|----------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|-------|-------------------|
| Post 1a) Today's event was helpful as regards improving autism support in my setting. **N=55 | 0 | 4 | 7 | 15 | 14 |
| Post 1b) Today's event provided important information about school improvement in relation to autism support. *N=55 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 20 | 13 |
| Post 1c) Today's event provided important information about preparing for OFSTED in relation of autism support. **N=55 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 16 | 19 |
| Post 1d) Today's event provided important information about quality assuring autism provision. **N=55 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 20 | 12 |
| Post 1e) Today's event provided important information regarding the support of staff development in relation to autism education. *N=55 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 18 | 17 |
| Post 1f) Today's event provided important information about | 0 | 2 | 18 | 10 | 8 |

the local offer in relation to
autism support. ***N=55

*14 missing data, **15 missing data, ***17 missing data.

The majority of responses were overall positive, with only items 1a) (the event being helpful regards improving autism support in their setting) and 1f) (the event providing important information about the local offer) having any disagrees. The most positive responses were for item 1c) (the event providing important information about preparing for OFSTED), and item 1e) (the event providing important information about supporting staff development), with 35 positive responses each.

Table 5.8 Post event questionnaire

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|----------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|-------|-------------------|
| Post 2a) The overview of the AET materials was useful. *N=55 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 16 | 19 |
| Post 2b) The case studies of implementation of the AET programme were useful. **N=55 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 12 | 17 |
| Post 2c) The sessions sharing practice, knowledge and expertise were useful. *N=55 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 18 | 15 |

* 13 missing data, ** 16 missing data

The majority of responses were overall positive for the sessions sharing practice, knowledge and expertise being useful (33/42) with only one response being negative. The usefulness of the AET overview was also seen by the majority as overall positive (35/42) with two response being negative. Again for the case studies implementation the majority were positive (29) with three being negative.

On the post-event questionnaire there was the option to write down one positive change the attendee was hoping to make and also any open comments about the event. 36 out of 55 gave a comment. Some themes appeared in the positive change comments which are presented in Boxes 12-13 below.

Box 12 Illustrative examples about training

- 'Will try to link with another primary school to organise training for all staff (incl. SMSA's) I will be looking at implementing the progression framework.'
- 'I would like to encourage our Head to go ahead with Tier 2 training and begin to complete framework and complete targets on SIP. I am heading a research group in Autism so good ideas and further research.'
- 'To advise an annual tier 1 delivering at the beginning of every academic year in school with all staff.'
- 'I will tell my school about the training opportunities.'

Box 13 Illustrative examples about future actions

- 'Pilot some of resources with staff. Very interested in having a framework and competencies to work to. Great that there is a strong link to EYFS.'
- 'Reflection on the importance CPD/Autism knowledge. - Review progression, in more than just 'subject areas'.'
- 'I am intending to feedback and share information with the SEN department. Also as whole school to hopefully have the tier 1 training to enhance awareness and understanding about Autism.'
- 'Definitely will ask SEND co-ordinator to look at the 34 standards on the website from the framework and see if AET can inform our practice.'
- 'Talk through with Head re. Ofsted expectations and foci. -Whole school

Many of the commenters wanted to audit their settings practice or own practice. There were a number who also mentioned about changing the culture of their setting to being more positive towards those pupils with autism.

5.3.3 Regional Network event D

This free event was aimed at school leaders, SENCOs and autism leads. The AET programme was introduced as was the schools autism Competency Framework. 28 people completed the pre and post-event questionnaires. There was missing data for some of the questions, which are shown in the tables below. All tables use actual figures.

Job/role of delegates:

- 10 were SENCOs.
- 10 were class teachers.
- Six were teaching or learning support assistants.
- There was one Head teacher, two Assistant Heads and one Deputy Head.
- The remaining attendees were an inclusion manager, a school social worker, a specialist teacher and a student teacher.

The figures do not add up to 28 as some attendees indicated they had two roles, e.g. SENCO and class teacher, so have been counted in both.

Settings:

- The majority (24/28) worked in a primary school setting
- One worked in a secondary special school

- Two worked in special schools
- One worked in homes, nurseries and schools

One of the primary setting attendees also indicated that it was a special school.

Table 5.9 pre-event questionnaire

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|----------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|-------|-------------------|
| 2a) I am confident that the setting I work in has good autism support in place for its children and young people. * | 0 | 1 | 9 | 10 | 7 |
| 2b) I am confident that the setting I work in has an effective staff development plan in place with regards to autism support. * | 0 | 5 | 11 | 5 | 6 |
| 2c) I am confident that the setting I work in has an effective school improvement plan in place with regards to autism support. * | 0 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 9 |
| 2d) The setting I work in is part of a good, existing, network which helps support my setting's autism strategy. * | 0 | 5 | 9 | 8 | 5 |

2e) The setting I work in has a clear idea of the support it can draw on from the LA. **

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 9 | 9 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

* 1 missing data, ** 2 missing data

The majority agreed with each statement regarding their setting, with the first statement, about being confident that their setting has good autism support in place for its children and young people, being the strongest (17/27). The three middle statements, focusing on respondent's settings and the degree to which the settings had good autism support in place, had a large minority reporting that they disagreed with them. This indicated that delegates were concerned that their settings needed to tackle challenges with regard to autism support.

Table 5.10 Post-event questionnaire

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Post 1a) Today's event was helpful as regards improving autism support in my setting. | 1 | 0 | 5 | 9 | 13 |
| Post 1b) Today's event provided important information about school improvement in relation to autism support. | 1 | 0 | 3 | 13 | 11 |
| Post 1c) Today's event provided important information about | 1 | 3 | 12 | 7 | 5 |

preparing for OFSTED in relation of autism support.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|----|---|
| Post 1d) Today's event provided important information about quality assuring autism provision.* | 1 | 0 | 4 | 14 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|----|---|

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| Post 1e) Today's event provided important information regarding the support of staff development in relation to autism education. | 1 | 0 | 4 | 11 | 12 |
|---|---|---|---|----|----|

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|----|
| Post 1f) Today's event provided important information about the local offer in relation to autism support. | 1 | 3 | 7 | 7 | 10 |
|--|---|---|---|---|----|

* 2 missing data. (The strongly disagree answers were all the same person, and it is possible that the responses had been read in the wrong direction by the delegate).

The majority of respondents were overall positive about each item, reflecting a high level of satisfaction with the event and its value to the delegates.

Open responses were asked for on the post-event questionnaire. Attendees were asked to state one positive change that they hoped to make and were also asked for any comments relating to the event. There were 23 positive change comments and seven open comments, a selection of which are presented in Boxes 14 and 15, respectively. Many of the positive change comments were regarding using the Progression Framework. Statements were chosen by perceived importance by the researcher and also how specific they were.

Box 14 Illustrative comments about positive changes the attendee hopes to make as a result of the Regional Network meeting

- 'I am going to use the progression framework with individuals in my school.'
- 'To work together closely with members in unit to create 'profiles' from work on individuals.'
- 'AET materials - I will present to TAs to inform practice and help them to plan individual needs/interventions.'

Box 15 Illustrative positive comments about the Regional network meeting

- 'A very positive and useful insight into what support is out there.'
- 'What a wonderful location and engaging presenters, staff and attendees.'

5.3.4 Regional Network event E

Regional Network event E focussed on presentations from four different LAs who discussed how they had used the AET materials to enhance and develop provision. Time was provided for discussion among and between tables.

There were 26 respondents to the pre-questionnaire, three of whom did not complete the post questionnaire. There was missing data for every question apart from whether the respondent had a management role (18 out of 26 did).

Job/role of delegates:

- The largest group in attendance were Advisory/Consultant/SEND teachers with 8/26.
- The rest were quite varied:
 - Autism Outreach Head or Assistant Manager, LA SEND team, Commissioning and Finance Officer, AET Manager, Assistant Head, SEND Advisor, Senior

Educational Psychologist, Leader of Specialist Inclusion Services, and Autism Team Lead.

Settings:

- The most common setting was any school (7/24), with an additional person saying only primary and one saying secondary.
- There were four from a support service team and two from outreach services
- Five worked for a Local Authority.
- The remaining attendees were made up of Peripatetic team, SENAR, outside agency and Educational Psychology service.

Twenty-three were from a setting other than a primary or secondary school. All of the data in the tables is presented as actual numbers rather than percentages.

Table 5.11 pre-event questionnaire

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|----------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|-------|-------------------|
| a) I am confident that the setting I work in has good autism support in place for its children and young people. * | 0 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 8 |
| b) I am confident that the setting I work in has an effective staff development plan in place | 0 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 7 |

with regards to autism support.

*

c) I am confident that the setting I work in has an effective school/setting improvement plan in place with regards autism support. **

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

d) The setting I work in is part of a good, existing, network which helps support my setting's autism strategy. **

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

e) The setting I work in has a clear idea of the support it can draw from the LA. ***

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|----|
| 0 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|----|

*4 missing data, **5 missing data, **7 missing data

There were disagree responses for each item, which were about attendees' current settings but all were more overall positive than negative. There was missing data for each question so perhaps some attendees were unsure of their settings autism support and provision.

Table 5.12 Post-event questionnaire

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| a) Today's event provided me with a good understanding of | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 14 |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|----|
| the AET programme offer in relation to autism support. * | | | | | |
| b) Today's event was helpful in terms of future planning to improve autism support in my setting. ** | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 12 |
| c) Today's event gave me a good idea/s in relation to the possible next steps my setting could take by engaging with the AET Programme. ** | 0 | 0 | 2 | 9 | 11 |
| d) At today's event, I made good, new contacts with colleagues in the region. ** | 0 | 0 | 4 | 9 | 9 |
| e) At today's event, I was able to share with colleagues, and to hear of, best practice in the region. * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 14 |

* 3 missing data, ** 4 missing data,

There were no negative responses to the post-event statements, with all being overall positive for items a and e which were about the event providing attendees with a good understanding of the AET programme offer, and the event providing the opportunity to share with colleagues, and hear of best practice in the region, respectively.

Attendees were asked to provide one positive change they were hoping to make as a result of the event and they were also invited to make any open comments regarding the whole event. 17 wrote down a positive change and 7 wrote an open comment. A selection of these

comments are presented in Boxes 16 and 17 below. Statements were chosen by perceived importance by the researcher and also by how specific they were.

Box 16 Illustrative comments about positive changes the attendee hopes to make as a result of the Regional Network Meeting

- 'We have already started to use AET Programme in my setting. Plan to use competencies for staff CPD.'
- 'Investigate possibility of AET programme.'
- 'I work in Sensory Support and do outreach work for CYP with a visual impairment. As, particularly at lower levels of cognitive ability, sometimes greater learning needs can overshadow the VI, so I want to make contacts to share the word with practitioners about our service and makes links to ASC-hopefully I've made a start (shared contact - joined forum).'

Box 17 Illustrative positive comments about the Regional Network Meeting

- 'Really interesting to find out about how autism support is being consistently set up across the Region. Also good to discuss with peers how ASC is managed alongside other needs.'
- 'Very valuable to hear how different authorities are all using the AET programme.'

5.3.5 Regional Network event F

Regional Network event F was aimed at those work in specialist settings. Presentations included:

- The new AET Complex Needs module.
- Using the AET Progression Framework to support identification of needs.

- A presentation from a SENCO who runs a special unit attached to a mainstream school.
- An adult with autism who discussed their schooling.

There were 30 respondents to the pre-event questionnaire, seven of whom did not complete the post-event questionnaire. Fifteen (50%) of the respondents had a management role. All of the data in the tables is presented as actual numbers rather than percentages.

There were a variety of roles represented by the 29 respondents who wrote down their job title. Some of them included: Advisory Teacher, SENCO, Deputy Head, Educational Psychologist, Lead Teacher of a Resource Base, SEND Advisor, Psychotherapist, and Teaching Assistant.

The settings were varied too, which reflects the number of jobs represented above. Settings included: Local Authority, Special School, Specialist provision or resource base, and a Social and Emotional and Mental Health setting.

Table 5.13 pre-event questionnaire

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| a) I am confident that the setting I work in has good autism support in place for its children and young people. * | 1 | 1 | 11 | 6 | 10 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|----|---|
| b) I am confident that the setting I work in has an effective staff development plan in place with regards to autism support. * | 1 | 3 | 9 | 8 | 8 |
| c) I am confident that the setting I work in has an effective improvement plan in place with regards autism support. * | 1 | 4 | 7 | 10 | 7 |
| d) The setting I work in is part of a good, existing, network which helps support my setting's autism strategy. * | 1 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| e) The setting I work in has a clear idea of the support it can draw from the LA. ** | 1 | 4 | 8 | 6 | 8 |

*1 missing data, ** 3 missing data

(All of the strongly disagrees were from the same respondent.)

Table 5.14 Post-event questionnaire

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| a) Today's event gave me a good understanding of the AET programme offer for specialist settings. * | 0 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 13 |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|----|----|
| b) Today's event provided important information in relation to improving target setting for children/young people in my setting. * | 0 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 14 |
| c) Today's event provided important information about school/setting improvement in relation to autism support. * | 0 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 14 |
| d) Today's event provided important information about quality assuring autism provision. * | 0 | 0 | 2 | 10 | 11 |
| e) I was able to make good, new contacts with other colleagues in the region. ** | 1 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 9 |

* 7 missing data, ** 8 missing data

Apart from item e ('I was able to make good, new contacts'), the responses were all positive or neutral. This item did still have a majority who were positive (16/22). Items a and c were the most positive as only one person was neutral for each. These items were regarding the event providing a good understanding of the AET programme and the event providing important information about school/setting improvement in relation to autism support, respectively. There was approximately a third of the data missing from the post-event questionnaire. (This is perhaps due to attendees leaving early to avoid the traffic, as the location was in a city centre).

Box 18 Illustrative comments about positive changes the attendee hopes to make as a result of the Regional Network Meeting

- 'I will relay details to SENCO and Head teacher.'
- 'Introduce the progression framework within school.'
- 'Implement the complex needs module. To implement further and embed progression framework and standards.'
- 'Emphasise student voice - person centred approach. Strengths and difficulties questionnaire intend to login to use this measure.'
- 'Make myself more aware of the learning outcomes in the framework to map to our current provision.'

5.3.6 Regional Network event G

Regional Network event G was a free networking event aimed at school governors. It provided an overview of the AET programme and how it can be used to support school senior leaders and governors to meet their statutory duties. Twenty-one people completed the pre and post-event questionnaire. There was missing data for some of the items, which is indicated below each table. All data in the tables is reported as the actual number of respondents rather than percentage.

Job/role of delegates:

- The majority (18/21) were governors, with three of these being the Chair of Governors.
- Three were Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA).
- One was a supply teacher and private tutor.

Some wrote down more than one job, e.g. Chair of governors and HLTA so they have been included in both categories.

Settings:

- Two-thirds (14/21) of the attendees worked in a primary school.
- Four worked in a secondary school.
- Three selected 'other' which included two special schools and one attendee who worked at both primary and secondary schools.

Table 5.15 pre-event questionnaire

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|----------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|-------|-------------------|
| 2a) I am confident that the setting I work in has good autism support in place for its children and young people. * | 0 | 0 | 13 | 5 | 2 |
| 2b) I am confident that the setting I work in has an effective staff development plan in place with regards to autism support. | 0 | 3 | 14 | 1 | 3 |
| 2c) I am confident that the setting I work in has an effective school improvement plan in place with regards to autism support. * | 0 | 2 | 12 | 4 | 2 |
| 2d) The setting I work in is part of a good, existing, network | 0 | 0 | 14 | 4 | 2 |

which helps support my
setting's autism strategy. *

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|----|---|---|
| 2e) The setting I work in has a | 0 | 1 | 10 | 6 | 2 |
| clear idea of the support it can | | | | | |
| draw on from the LA. ** | | | | | |

* 1 missing data, ** 2 missing data

The majority were unsure about their own settings, with 'neither agree nor disagree' being the most popular answer for each question. The most positive response was given to item 2e) which says that the respondent feels that their setting has a clear idea of what support it can draw on from the LA (8/19). The least positive response was for item 2b) which regarded their setting having an effective staff development plan in place with regards autism support, as three were negative and only four were positive.

Table 5.16 post-event questionnaire

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|----------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|-------|-------------------|
| Post 1a) Today's event was helpful as regards improving autism support in my setting. * | 0 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 8 |
| Post 1b) Today's event provided important information about school improvement in relation to autism support. | 0 | 0 | 5 | 8 | 8 |
| Post 1c) Today's event provided important information about | 0 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 1 |

preparing for OFSTED in relation
of autism support. *

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|----|---|
| Post 1d) Today's event provided | 1 | 0 | 6 | 10 | 4 |
| important information about | | | | | |
| quality assuring autism | | | | | |
| provision. | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Post 1e) Today's event provided | 0 | 1 | 6 | 8 | 6 |
| important information | | | | | |
| regarding the support of staff | | | | | |
| development in relation to | | | | | |
| autism education. | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Post 1f) Today's event provided | 2 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 4 |
| important information about | | | | | |
| the local offer in relation to | | | | | |
| autism support. ** | | | | | |

* 1 missing data, ** 2 missing data

Item 1b) (the event providing important information about school improvement in relation to autism support) had entirely positive or neutral answers with 16 out of 21 being positive. The majority were also positive about item 1a (the event being helpful for improving autism support in their setting – 15/20); item 1d (the event providing important information about quality assuring autism provision-14/20); and item 1e (the event providing important information regarding staff development-14/20), with only one negative response for each item. Item 1f had a significant minority who disagreed that the event had provided important information about the local offer in relation to autism support, with four out of 19 responding negatively and 11 responding positively.

Table 5.17 post-event questionnaire

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|----------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|-------|-------------------|
| Post 2a) The overview of the AET materials was useful. | 1 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 10 |
| Post 2b) The case studies of implementation of the AET programme were useful. | 0 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 8 |
| Post 2c) The sessions sharing practice, knowledge and expertise were useful. * | 1 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 8 |

* 1 missing data

The majority indicated that the overview of the AET materials was useful (18) and that the session sharing practice, knowledge and expertise were useful (16). A slightly smaller majority felt that the case studies of implementation of the AET programme were useful (14).

Open responses were asked for on the post-event questionnaire. Attendees were asked to state one positive change that they hoped to make and were also asked for any comments relating to the event. There were 15 positive change comments and 7 open comments, a selection of which are presented in Boxes 19 and 20, respectively. Statements were chosen by perceived importance by the researcher and also by how specific they were.

Box 19 Illustrative comments about positive changes the attendee hopes to make as a result of the Regional Network meeting

- 'Ensure training for TAs is robust. Analyse data in more detail with SENCO and Head.'
- 'My own knowledge has been updated - perhaps I can convey some of this to the SENCO.'
- 'Look at a standard on each learning walk I do.'

Box 20 Illustrative positive comments about the Regional network meeting

- 'Would have liked more time as really useful.'
- 'Effective event realising how much more there is to learn!'

5.4 Delegate follow-up interviews, and impact of the attendance at Regional Network meetings

In order to gather data on the longer term impact of attendance at the Regional Network events, the evaluation initially planned to carry out follow-up telephone interviews with delegates from all the planned events. The intention had been to allow two or three months before the follow-up interviews were conducted, in order to assess whether any changes had been planned, or, indeed, put into motion, as a result of the Regional Network events. The delays in the roll-out of the Regional Network events meant, however, that only two regions were ready for follow-up interviews to be conducted. These are reported together, with individuals coded depending on which of the two Regional Networks they attended - RN1 and RN2. For RN2, eight delegates were interviewed between two weeks and a month after the event; while for RN1, seven delegates were interviewed between six weeks and two months after the Regional Network event they had attended. The follow-up interviews were focused on four specific areas:

- How the delegate found out about the Regional Network event, and why it was thought to be worth attending.
- How useful the delegate had found the event at the time.
- Whether there had been any actions or developments in the delegate's setting or organisation that had taken place as a result of attendance at the Regional Network event.
- Looking to future possible offerings of Regional Network events, how could they be developed to be as useful as possible for settings and organisations working in autism support and education.

5.4.1 Follow-up interviews with delegates to Regional Network events RN1 and RN2

5.4.1.1 Finding out about the Regional Network events, and the decision to attend

The interviewees explained that they found out about the Regional Networks in a small number of ways: from an e-mail sent by the AET, from their line manager, by word-of-mouth from another colleague, or at an AET training session. Although not all of the interviewees found it straightforward to be released to attend the events, with one saying that 'it took a bit of persuading for my manager to let me go, because she's not got an SEN background,' (RN2a), more typical responses were very positive. The Regional Networks were seen to be of potential interest because:

- The interviewee's setting recognised that it was in need of additional knowledge about supporting CYPA.
- The interviewee wished to enhance their own CPD with regard to autism support.
- The interviewee and their setting was keen to make contacts with others working in the field.
- The interviewee and their setting wished to take part in what they hoped would be a permanent network of autism education stakeholders in their area and region.

An example of the motivation to attend a Regional Network event was that of a SENCo:

‘Our Head of Education is fairly new, so she thought it would be really good to come along, a) to network, but b) to learn. And I’m very keen on meeting other professionals, so I think having the chance to exchange, and to catch up, is very important to keep up with what’s going on. [...] And we’re very keen to be involved in perhaps sub-contracting [the AET training] because there’s a real hole in rural [county], this part of rural [county], and we’re quite keen in thinking about, and looking at the viability of becoming like a little offshoot centre for training.’ (RN2h)

The same themes of networking, exchanging knowledge and practice, and building autism support CPD was also present in another interviewees’ account of why she had chosen to attend a Regional Network event:

‘I saw this seminar [the Regional Network event], and it’s really important for me, rather than just to gather information, to make connections with people. And it’s not just me finding out who’s going to help me with regard to children with autism; it’s also to let them know that [her service] is available to help their children. And, as a result of attending that seminar [the Regional Network event] I’ve joined a forum with one of the other delegates, and I’m going to join in with them, and it’s bringing people together, and sharing the latest information of what’s going on, and who can help – so it’s very much building a support network.’ (RN1c)

This is a good account of a Regional Network event having an almost immediate positive impact, helping to grow an existing network, focused on building support, sharing knowledge, and developing autism education.

5.4.1.2 The usefulness of the Regional Network events

All of the interviewees were very positive or positive about their experience of attending a Regional Network event, and about their perception of how useful it had been. The only reservation, made by three of the interviewees, was that they would have liked more time to network with fellow delegates; in all three cases this was in relation to the half-day Regional Network event. The events were seen as useful as a result of mixing good speakers, training tasters, and opportunities to network. An example of the positive reaction to an event was given by an LA Early Years advisor:

‘I thought it was good that we had a variety of people there: it was good to have [training school] there, it was good to have [name] there from the AET team, it was good to have the AET director there – just to have those different slants. The other thing was it is always great to meet so many different people, and you say, “why are you here?”, and they say, “we’ve got this, and this is what we are doing”, and you begin to think, “oh, I’m the only one with this particular problem”, but then you realise you’re not, so you can come up with some joint things – I thought was really useful.’ (RN2c)

The positive responses to the content and opportunity to network that the events offered provide further evidence of the usefulness of the Regional Networks.

5.4.1.3 Subsequent actions arising from attendance at the Regional Network event

The interviewees were asked what impact attending the Regional Network events had on them and/or their settings. The responses fell into two categories –the Regional Network event confirmed the direction of the interviewee’s work, or, the event had led to planning in respect of autism support. Of the two, the lesser number of responses referred to the confirmation that workers and settings were on the right lines, or, that attendance confirmed provisional decisions to undertake AET training. For example, a member of an LA’s SEN team explained that a previous initiative designed to improve school provision for children with autism had not been as effective as hoped, and that the SEN team had begun

to think of the AET training package – something that the Regional Network event confirmed. Similarly, another interviewee, an LA autism outreach worker, described development since her attendance at a Regional Network event:

‘We’ve had quite a few discussions and we had a meeting yesterday afternoon which was our Outreach team and it came up again then. [Name], who I say has been over to see how it’s delivered at [school], she’s got a meeting set up to get resources and stuff to be able to start doing some of the [AET] training and then thinking about how that’s going look and, as with everybody, we’re trying to make it where is the time coming from? How is it most practical to do it? Do we offer it as going out to whole schools if they want it? Do we have people coming to us? So things like that.’
(RN2g)

The confirmation aspect of Regional Network attendance was reported by six of the interviewees.

The remaining nine interviewees all gave accounts of planning that had begun to be undertaken following attendance at the Regional Network events. This included: planning to extend AET training to more staff in schools; planning to incorporate AET National Standards into settings’ work; planning to incorporate the AET Competency Framework into staff CPD; and planning to make links with other LAs, with the possibility of sub-contracting AET training. Given the short time between the interviewees’ attendance at the events, and the follow-up interviews, this range of planning steps shows a high level of impact for the Regional Network events. An example of the impact on planning came from a senior Educational Psychologist, who explained:

‘We are going to get together, those people from [LA] who went to the day, we are going to get together and I’ve got a school who have got a couple of quite young children, one who will be starting in September and another one who’s already there

in Reception who have got quite significant ASD and I think I'm going to work with them around the [AET] Standards to help them develop their own in-house training really, well not in-house but to develop their own skills so I might go through the Standards with them to look at where they are at the moment so that it can help us think about what training they need and where to go next because they've got these two quite complex children so I think I'm going to use them as a bit of a pilot really to try out the materials with, but as a whole, as a county, I think [the LA] will move things forward and we will be looking at these in more detail because we've got some schools who are going to be opening bases for children with ASD and that's starting in September so we need to look into how we're going to use all the materials really to help the development of those.' (RN2b)

This suggests a major 'buy-in' to the AET mode of training and embedding, and was also reflected in the account of a different LA's Early Years advisor, who explained that her LA team was also beginning a similar planning process:

'[The team leader] and I have spoken and we have decided, we've written down a couple of names and [she] is going to take the lead, she's going to approach those people and say "right, we went on this conference [the Regional Network]. We've reflected on it a bit and we need to sit down and talk to you because it's all very well us doing this but we need a strategic lead on this, we need some kind of strategic decision and then we know where we're going' [...]. So that's where we are planning to take it.' (RN2a).

These examples were typical of the sort of planning moves that were being made by the majority of those delegates interviewed only a month, and two months, following their attendance at Regional Network event.

5.4.1.4 Regional Networks in the future

There was universal support among the interviewees for continuing Regional Network events. The interviewees expressed a small range of views regarding the possible future shape and approach of Regional Network events. Although one interviewee (RN2c) saw the future as being one more focused on attracting commissioners (with budgets) from LAs, the remaining interviewees saw the events as being less about the senior speakers, and more about networking, sharing knowledge, research, and peer support. In addition, interviewees said that regular meetings were important to maintain networks; and that, for schools, perhaps twilight sessions might be considered.

The stress on peer support, sharing knowledge and practice was common, with, for example, one interviewee saying:

‘I guess that’s what I’d be looking for from a regional network meeting was one where yes it would form CPD in that you would be presented with your latest reports or speculation of how things might be developing on new legislation or the things that we need to know and be kept fresh with and sometimes you don’t actually get the time to read around and find things for yourself but that also provides a very open and supportive peer support system.’ (RN1e)

Another interviewee made similar comments, stressing peer support and learning:

‘[It has to be] where colleagues can hopefully learn from each other the ways in which we can resolve a problem, that in actual fact we resolve problem A is we do a, b, c, and d, rather than f, g, h. I think that’s just sort of normal common learning that needs to function effectively in education, and the best way to do that is to bring people together to discuss and evaluate how they are getting on, and to take it to the next level to arrange cross visits between schools.’ (RN1d).

Added to these views, were those of another interviewee, who said that ‘the most important element [of a network] is knowing that there is somebody to turn to,’ (RN1b).

The Regional Network events were, then, welcomed by the interviewees, who hoped that they would both continue and be built upon. There was widespread agreement that networking was an important, additional element to training, and enabled continuing learning, and the embedding of learning.

5.5 Summary

The AET Programme 2016-17 provided pump-priming funding, of £10k per Regional Network, for five AET hubs to run four events per region. The total of 20 events were initially intended to have been run by the end of the 2016-17 financial year. However, delays in the roll out of events by some of the hubs, meant that by the end of March, 2017, only 10 of the events had been offered, with the remaining events planned in April, and May, 2017. Of the first 10 events delivered, the evaluation was made aware of seven of them. It was those seven Regional Network events which are reported here.

The Regional Network events were successful in delivering to a wide range of delegates across England. The approach adopted – that of allowing the Regional Hubs to determine the intended audience, and, therefore, the content, of each of the events – reflected the AET approach of regional delivery and fine-tuning. The Regional Networks reported on here drew in over 260 delegates from a wide range of stakeholders, including school governors, autism professionals, LA staff, education practitioners, Early Years, school, and P-16 workers, school leaders, and SEND practitioners. The data generated by pre and post-event questionnaires, delivered at the Regional Network events, showed a high degree of satisfaction with the running of the events, and with the information and knowledge gained, along with the, valued, opportunities for networking.

Follow-up interviews, carried out with delegates who had attended two of the earliest Regional Network events (allowing for up to two months before the follow-up interviews took place) indicated that the events had generated impact. In terms of planning to progress autism support at all levels, the interviewees gave a wide range of planning that was in place as a result of attendance at the Regional Network events. In addition, there was strong support expressed for the hope that Regional Network events might continue in the future.

6. The Young People's Panel

6.1 The Young People's Panel and the evaluation

6.1.1 The Young People's Panel

The AET Programme 2016-2017 intended to establish an AET Young People's Panel (YPP) to input into all aspects of the AET Programme and its future development. The task during the 2016-2017 Programme was to recruit, train, and bring together a YPP, to begin the process of engaging with the development of the AET Programme.

6.1.2 The evaluation

The evaluation was limited to providing a narrative account of the preparation for, and the setting up of the YPP. The evaluation interviewed the initial project lead in October, 2016, collected documentation relating to the training of the YPP members, and attended one of two YPP meetings. The data gathered from all these sources is used here to present the narrative account of the YPP in its initial stages, from the summer of 2016 to February, 2017.

6.2 Creating the Young People's Panel

The initial project lead for the YPP was interviewed in October, 2016, and gave an account of the first stages in the creation of the YPP. Ambitious About Autism (AAA) used its existing networks to advertise for young people with autism to become part of the YPP. One of the networks was the 'My Voice' network, which has been running for more than two years¹⁰, and brings together young people, aged 16-25, to facilitate the active involvement of young people with autism in areas, such as medical services, that directly affect them. Some of the young people who applied for the YPP came from the My Voice volunteers, but others were new to AAA. By the end of the summer of 2016, AAA had received applications from more than 30 young people with autism who were interested in joining the YPP. The final selection of eight panel members was carried out by a young people's participation co-

¹⁰ <https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/about-myvoice-0>, accessed, 5 April, 2017.

ordinator, one of the youth patrons of AAA. The panel then encompassed a range of young people:

‘So we’ve got one young man, [name], who is studying a Masters in Special Needs Education, and then we’ve got another young lady, [name], who is training to be a teaching assistant. And then we’ve got another young lady, who isn’t actually studying at the moment but has a wealth of experience across the range. So I think we’ve got a really nice group. We’ve also got a couple of young ladies who one has just started at university and one has just started her second year at university. So they’ve all had a wide range of experiences in education.’ (YPL/1)

Once the panel membership had been finalised, an introduction day was held in September, 2016, when the young people met for the first time, and were briefed about the role of the YPP, and its function in terms of feeding into the work of the AET across all elements of its Programme. The young people then took part in ‘we call Influences training, and this is a training module that we put together with the British Youth Council to help young people understand their role in meetings, the different types of meetings that you might be part of, how to influence decision making and basically meeting etiquette,’ (YPL/1). The main focus of AAA was to develop ‘a framework so that we could support the young advisors [of the YPP] in their work, and make it appropriate and meaningful for the AET,’ (YPL/1). This entailed providing clear, and clearly presented briefings and instructions for the YPP as to their role, the work that they were being asked to evaluate and provide feedback on, preparation for meetings, and the facilitation of non-face-to-face contribution, for example, by Skype.

The first YPP evaluation meeting was held in London on 14th January, 2017. The advisors had all been provided with briefs and work sheets prior to the meeting. This enabled them to focus their work on the specific AET projects that were under discussion. The evaluation panel was given presentations by the AET Post-16 project (‘Supporting the Move from

School to College'), and the AET Exclusions project. The young advisors discussed the projects, questioned the speakers, and provided feedback. The YPP meeting then adjourned for an evening meal together. The second YPP meeting was held in London, on 25th February, 2017. The evaluation was unable to attend the meeting and, at the time of writing (5th April), meeting minutes had not been received from AAA.

Feedback from the YPP to the various AET Programme strands was collated by AAA, and circulated to the strand leads. An example from one of the feedback documents is given in box 21, which reports YPP feedback on Supporting the Move from School to College.

Box 21 An example of YPP feedback to an AET project – Supporting the Move from School to College

'Once we [the YPP] are fully equipped to do so, could it be possible for us as Young Ambassadors to go into educational settings and ask students for their feedback in relaxed, safe settings? As young people with Autism ourselves, I hope that there would be a strong trust element which would be reflected in the feedback'.

'Where appropriate, it would be good for individuals with Autism themselves to observe the training being delivered, so they know what information their supporters are being equipped with, and how they are directed to use it; that way, should there be any discrepancies, the individual with Autism can refer training being delivered on their behalf to point out any issues they perceive'.

'AET Post-16 Project – Young Advisors Feedback', via AAA, YPP project.

The successful establishment of the YPP and its first meetings will be followed by further meetings in June, September and November, 2017, and in February, 2018. The YPP is now in a position to continue and extend its role in relation to all parts of the AET Programme.

6.2 Summary

The Young People's Panel was successfully recruited, trained, and rolled out during the AET Programme 2016-17. It has already provided feedback and input into parts of the AET Programme, and is now in a position to extend and deepen its involvement, as the voice of young people with autism, in the whole AET Programme. Dates for future meetings of the YPP have been set up to February, 2018.

7 Conclusions

- The success of the Exclusions Project in supporting nearly 12,000 parents/carers through a variety of platforms during the AET Programme 2016-17, illustrates the continuing need for such support. The data gathered by the evaluation from parents/carers who attended the exclusions seminars, run as part of the Exclusions Project, suggests that the issues faced by CYPA in relation to exclusions continue to be problematic. The exclusions issue is complex, combining structural, personal, and legal challenges for parents/carers of CYPA in their dealings with educational settings and other stake holders. In consequence, it is important the Exclusions Project continues to be offered to parents/carers and educational settings concerned with the support of CYPA. In addition, the role of the volunteer support worker on the Exclusions Project should be noted as an important, but challenging one. The initial intention to recruit and train five volunteers proved difficult, and only one volunteer was active at the time of the evaluation. Some thought might be given to ways in which additional volunteers can be recruited in future.
- The Supporting the Move from School to College project was a highly successful element of the AET Programme 2016-17. The project met all of its deliverables, and piloted the revised and developed training package – combining the AET Post-16 training with learning from Ambitious About Autism’s Succeeding At College training- through nine regional training events. The Supporting the Move from School to College package and is a valuable extension of the AET offer in this area, and it is recommended that stakeholders are made fully aware of this development.
- The Regional Network events were successful in delivering to a wide range of delegates across England. The approach adopted – that of allowing the Regional Hubs to determine the intended audience, and, therefore, the content, of each of the events – reflected the AET approach of regional delivery and fine-tuning. The data generated by pre and post-event questionnaires, delivered at the Regional Network events, showed a high degree of satisfaction with the running of the events, and with the information and knowledge gained, along with the, valued, opportunities for networking. Follow-up interviews, carried out with delegates who

had attended two of the earliest Regional Network events indicated that the events had generated impact. In terms of planning to progress autism support at all levels, the interviewees gave a wide range of planning that was in place as a result of attendance at the Regional Network events. In addition, there was strong support expressed for the hope that Regional Network events might continue in the future. The main challenge faced by some of the Regional hubs was in delivering the Regional Network events within the originally planned timeframe. It might be that the AET, in similar circumstances in future, develop mechanism for monitoring project delivery.

- The Young People's Panel was successfully recruited, trained, and rolled out during the AET Programme 2016-17. It has already provided feedback and input into parts of the AET Programme, and is now in a position to extend and deepen its involvement, as the voice of young people with autism, in the whole AET Programme. Dates for future meetings of the YPP have been set up to February, 2018.

Appendices

Appendix 1: NAS Exclusions Project evaluation questionnaire

Survey emailed to parents 5 weeks after an email enquiry or phone appointment to the School Exclusions Service

- 1. The Exclusions Adviser fully understood my enquiry.**
- 2. The Exclusions Adviser helped me to understand the options open to me.**
- 3. I feel able to act upon the information I received from The Exclusions Adviser.**
- 4. The literature I received following my enquiry was helpful.**
- 5. I am satisfied with how The Exclusions Adviser dealt with my enquiry.**
- 6. I feel more knowledgeable about the exclusion process.**
- 7. I know what I would have to do, if I wanted to challenge a school's decision to exclude a pupil.**
- 8. I am aware of a school's duty to make 'reasonable adjustments', in order to avoid pupils with disabilities being put at a disadvantage.**
- 9. I know which school policies are relevant to exclusion.**
- 10. What happened next? Following contact with the Autism Helpline Specialist School Exclusion Service, how has your child's situation changed?** (Please continue on a separate sheet, if necessary. We may use anonymous comments that people make about our services in leaflets and reports).

11. Are there any comments you would like to make about the Exclusions Service, including improvements that could be made? (We may use anonymous comments that people make about our services in leaflets and reports).

12. If you needed to, would you use the Exclusions Service again?

(N.B., this is the NAS's own questionnaire. Responses were given to a five point Likert scale, from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree'):